VICE SQUAD: DREYFUSS ON THE MAD WORLD OF DICK CHENEY

THE AMERICAN Prospect

LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

MAY 2006

New York's Little Party That Could

How Oregon Is Saving Democracy

What's the Big Idea?

The GOP is in free fall and conservative philosophy is collapsing. The Democrats smell victory—but winning will mean nothing unless they recognize that their opportunity transcends one election.

Michael Tomasky on the virtue of standing for something



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MAY 2006
VOLUME 17 • NUMBER 5

THE AMERICAN Prospect
LIBERAL INTELLIGENCE

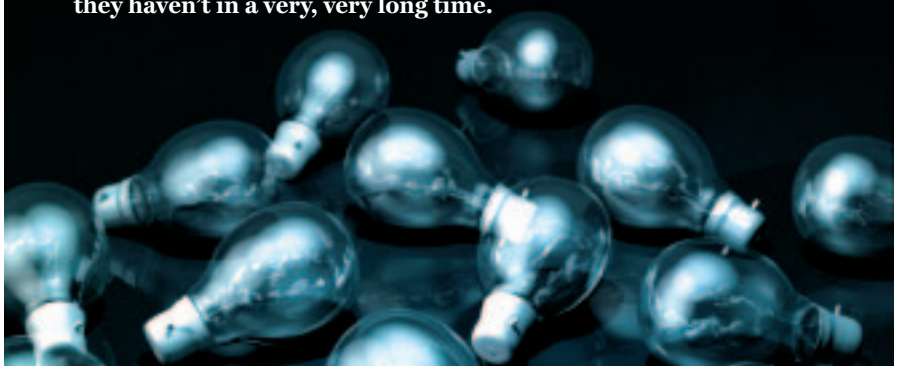
"Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth, more than ruin, more even than death ..."

— BERTRAND RUSSELL

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES **$24.95 (U.S.), $34.95 (Canada) and $39.95 (foreign)**
MEDIA RELATIONS **Dorian Friedman, (202) 776-0730**
NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION **Big Top Newsstand Services, a division of the IPA, (415) 445-0230 or fax (415) 445-0231 or e-mail bigtop@indypress.org**
PRESS SYNDICATION **Agence Global, (336) 686-9002**
REPRINTS **permissions@prospect.org**

The American Prospect (ISSN 1049-7285) is published monthly by The American Prospect, Inc., 2000 L Street., NW, Suite 717, Washington, DC 20036 (editorial office) and 11 Beacon Street, Suite 1120, Boston, MA 02108 (business office). Periodicals-class postage paid at Boston, MA, and additional post offices. Copyright © 2006 by The American Prospect, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The American Prospect, Inc. *The American Prospect* ® is a registered trademark of The American Prospect, Inc. Postmaster: Please send address changes to *The American Prospect*, P.O. Box 601, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-7531. Printed in the United States.

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Next Stop Iran?

DURING THE EARLY COLD WAR, WHILE RIGHT-wingers called for the rollback of Soviet communism, the strategists of containment argued that the United States ought to be patient, confident that internal forces would weaken communism from within and that the "gravitational" force of a revived Western Europe would eventually draw Moscow's satellites out of its orbit. It took decades, but the strategy worked. We can only imagine the toll in human life if the advocates of rollback had been in charge and led the West into war with Russia.

Unfortunately, the people running U.S. policy today are the spiritual descendants of the right-wing promoters of rollback, and the toll from their policies grows every day. The United States was containing Saddam Hussein successfully before George W. Bush decided on a course of preventive war and regime change in Iraq. All that has happened since is a cautionary tale about American hubris. Whether the U.S. invasion will eventually succeed in bringing about regime change, we cannot say. What we have now is a regime vacuum: Creating a new Iraqi state has proved to be far more difficult than destroying the old one. And the war, instead of ending, has continued to evolve, first into an insurgency and now into sectarian strife that nearly everyone regards as civil war.

This phase, however, may not be the conflict's last. As disastrous as the war has been, the president still has the opportunity to enlarge it into an even greater catastrophe by carrying out plans that the military has been preparing for a strike against Iran. According to a report by Seymour Hersh in *The New Yorker*, key members of the administration believe that an air attack could not only knock out Iran's nuclear-weapons-related facilities but also destabilize its government. And because some of Iran's facilities are deep underground, Hersh reports, the administration is considering proposals to use tactical nuclear weapons.

The logic of an attack on Iran has such palpable flaws that many observers cannot believe that Bush would undertake it. Even if successful in hitting the major weapons-related sites, an airstrike would set back Iran's nuclear program only for a time while reinforcing the regime's resolve to carry it out. Our use of nuclear weapons would seemingly legitimate their use against us someday. And instead of undermining the regime, an attack would likely help consolidate its power by inflaming Iranian nationalism.

Yes, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is dangerous. So was Stalin. Containment may be our only option.

Any strike against Iran would also not end there. Iran could retaliate against the United States through its terrorist agents, and its response could include steps to strangle the world's supply of oil, thereby setting off a global economic crisis. In Iraq, Moqtada al-Sadr has already said his militia would retaliate if the United States attacks Iran. Rather than keeping the peace, American forces in Iraq would likely find themselves besieged by both of the country's major religious groups, Sunni and Shia. Well, at least we'd bring them together on that point.

Before yielding to panic over Iran, America desperately needs a dose of realism. No one likes the choices before us, but that is no reason to opt for a policy likely to trigger disastrous consequences. The United States should seek to isolate Iran's government by building alliances against it. In the end, however, unless we are prepared to invade and occupy Iran too, nothing we can do may prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons. There may be no alternative except the policies that worked in the Cold War: deterrence, containment, and diplomacy. Yes, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is dangerous. So was Stalin.

In Iraq, we do have a moral obligation to try to avert full-scale civil war, but American forces haven't been able to prevent Iraq from descending into chaos, and we might better discharge our obligations by underwriting a multinational peacekeeping force, primarily Arab in composition, possibly under United Nations command. A de facto partitioning of Iraq into three autonomous regions under a weak federation may be the best outcome we can hope for.

More generally, America needs to devise an exit not just from Iraq, but from the spiral of antagonism with the Islamic world. The president has brilliantly combined lectures on the desirability of democracy in the Middle East with policies guaranteed to inflame popular majorities against us. Another preventive war would make that antagonism worse. But there is another possibility. If we can get out of the vicious cycle created by Bush's misconceived efforts to project force, the West's freedom and prosperity may begin to exert their gravitational pull. As the architects of Cold War strategy understood, those are our really powerful weapons. **TAP**

— PAUL STARR

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We like Al Gore, and we don't like the snickering we hear coming from the seaboard.

— JACK BURGESS
CHILLICOTHE, OH

Uh, We Did That?

THE DAY I RECEIVED *THE American Prospect* in the mail, I had already heard on radio and TV that Gore was saying he wasn't going to run for president in 2008. Apparently you showed him an advance copy of Ezra Klein's story ["The New New Gore," April 2006]. If this were the kind of coverage he can expect from a "liberal" publication, I'd hate to see what the rest of the "liberal" media would do to him.

Like lots of liberal Democrats, I often feel as though I'm living in the Matrix, and things are *not* what they seem to be. The majority of American voters who voted for Gore in 2000 never found him boring, especially compared to George W. Bush. True, I never felt like drinking a beer with him, but then, like many voters, I don't drink a lot of beer. I certainly wouldn't want to have a beer with the tiresome, recovering alcoholic ex-governor of Texas, as we were told over and over by the inside-the-Beltway press we really would like to do. I *would* like to have a conversation with Al Gore about global warming or a dozen other topics. I suspect there are a lot of people out here who feel the same way.

Specifically, my complaint is that you have continued the trend of trivializing Al Gore and his ideas. Go back and read your lead: "Five years ago, Al Gore was the much-mocked pol who blew a gimme with his stiff demeanor and know-it-all style." He *was* much mocked, but not much by the folks I knew. He was mocked by the smart set at the Beltway press and by Republicans—the same crew of people who gave us "the weapons of mass destruction are real, really!" That kind of reporting gave us the Iraq war and thousands of unnecessary deaths. Your kind of writing will get us an argument about whether Gore has *really, really* changed, and isn't the bald spot getting larger?

I taught American and Global Studies to high school students in 2000, and I did hear some of my sophomores parroting the Republicans and *The New York Times*—nonsense like mocking Gore for inventing the Internet. A little more serious were the charges here in southern Ohio that he would take away our guns, hurt the coal-mining industry, or raise gasoline prices. But Gore carried most of the cities of Ohio and only lost the state by 3 percent, even though he didn't campaign much here. Gore also labored with the stigma of having stood with Clinton in his hour of persecution.

But the majority of American voters did choose him—maybe including Florida, if Greg Palast's reports are accurate. His speeches weren't great, but they were good. (In a reality check, I went back and played a tape of his convention speech and some of the commentary following it. The speech was assessed as very good, and I concurred). If you look historically, vice presidents often have a tough time winning the White House on a first try—case in point, Nixon in 1960—so he should *not* have been the favorite and expected to win. One can argue that he lost the election not only in the Supreme Court, but also in the cute-and-clever writing at *The Washington Post* and the *Times*. They didn't like him, and they didn't want us to.

Most of the Democrats I know would support Gore in 2008 in a heartbeat. Most of us were sorry he didn't run last time. We turned to Dean when Gore chose not to run. I don't know a single Democrat—and I'm very active in the state—who really likes Hillary Clinton, with her support for the war, her support for a constitutional amendment on flag salutes, and the like.

There are a large number of Democrats and some independents who will get behind an anti-war candidate and will hang back on any candidate who has supported the war. It is a moral issue. Gore seems to understand that. The bottom line is that what a candidate stands for is still more important than his or her style, to millions of us. We are very tired of the too-clever-by-half media that seems more interested in its own voice than that of the candidates. Teachers, parents, workers, soldiers, veterans, and most ordinary Americans are looking for substance, honesty, brains, and courage. We like Al Gore, and we don't like the snickering we hear coming from the seaboard.

JACK BURGESS
Chillicothe, OH

Ezra Klein responds: Man, and here I was worried about getting flayed for a puff piece! I applaud Jack's clear-headed assessment of Gore in 2000, but the bottom line, easily seen in the former Veep's recent poll numbers, is that society writ large hasn't retained quite so benevolent an attitude. To paraphrase the old adage, those who ignore the past are doomed to repeat it. My aim in the article was to contrast the impassioned, innovative man my reporting unearthed with the distorted dullard the media too often represents. In some ways, my piece was less for Jack than it was for his nemeses on the Eastern seaboard.

More Gore

THANKS MUCH FOR THE Al Gore article in the last issue of *The American Prospect*. It is the first ray of hope I have felt about the Democrats winning the 2008 presidential election.

Although I live in a "blue" state (Massachusetts) there is very little media coverage of Gore, and I didn't have any idea that he has been out there giving such good speeches. As you know, there is also very lit-

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tle national media coverage.

I am glad to hear that he has distanced himself from the Democratic Leadership Council, because I am convinced that they were responsible for losing the 2000 and 2004 elections. They are the ones who are not in touch with the American public, and the Democrats need to rally around people like Howard Dean and Al Gore the next time around.

Thanks again for your very informative article.

BARBARA SULLIVAN
Wilmington, MA

Penta-gone

IN AN OTHERWISE USEFUL account, Harold Meyerson says in "Not Your Father's Detroit" [April] that, after World War II, "our technological innovation, often spurred by the investment of federal defense dollars, was second to none, and those innovations were turned into products at factories here in the United States." No, they were not. It was exactly the "federal defense dollars" that quickly pre-empted the technological innovation, virtually redefining it in military terms and, in effect, kicking off our industrial decline. The trend accelerated after John F. Kennedy escalated the scientific content of weaponry and started the space race. The permanently open checkbook of the Pentagon not only led to the familiar military-industrial waste and product failures, but also quickly destroyed the art of product development—the integration of technology with production skills and marketing that had been the true glory of American industry.

It did not take long for others to take the lead. When, in 1954, the Western Electric Co. was required by an antitrust settlement to license its then new solid-state technology, the takers were almost all Japanese. It has long been impossible to buy any major electronic commercial product wholly made in the United States and in many of them, beginning with VCRs, there were no American entries at all. A recent report showed that the monthly trade deficit had declined slightly, carefully noted that it was because Boeing had sold a few more airplanes, one of the few durable exports we still have.

In short, our industrial crisis is a Cold War relic that was systematically ignored during all those decades and eventually merged into the "service economy," globalization and "productivity" delusions. (Productivity in what? Medical billing and tax preparation?)

The remedy is easy. It is renewal of the infrastructure, which, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, is suffering from $1.6 trillion worth of neglect. In his 1992 campaign, Bill Clinton proposed a $200 billion program. It fell victim to the deficit hawks, as your co-founder Robert Reich has duly noted.

JOHN E. ULLMANN
Professor Emeritus, Frank G. Zarb School of Business, Hofstra University

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Up Front



CARD SHUFFLING

It's a season of "staff shake-ups" and "new directions" at the beleaguered Bush White House. In late March, Bush announced the replacement of Andy Card with Office of Management and Budget Director Josh Bolten as White House chief of staff. This has prompted speculation of further retirements to come, centered particularly on Treasury Secretary John Snow and the White House's hapless press secretary, Scott McClellan.

There's a quality of unreality to recent press obsession with these changes—they not only amount to a faux shake-up, but are perversely unrelated to the actual problems underlying the president's cratering approval numbers. Bush replaced the dogged loyalist Card not with a high-powered and respected outsider but with ... another dogged loyalist. Meanwhile, the deficiencies that Bushies have long attributed to Snow have nothing to do with substance. Instead, he's blamed for failing as a cheerleader, as if a more skilled spokesman could convince Americans that they've actually enjoyed the country's stagnant-wage recovery more than they realized. Similar thinking underlies the McClellan speculation—that it still might be possible for new supercharged flaks to spin the administration out of the hole the president has dug for it.

But surely until the president himself engages the substantive problems that underlie his own unpopularity (anyone holding their breath?), shuffling some personnel around merely amounts to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.

—Sam Rosenfeld

DROPPED HAMMER

Tom DeLay's announced retirement from public office couldn't have happened in a manner more perfectly reflective of the man. First came the amusing reports that part of the rationale for the announcement's timing was DeLay's ability to convert the money he raised for his re-election campaign directly to funds for his ever-burgeoning legal expenses. Meanwhile, in the *Time* interview announcing his retirement, DeLay indicated plans to step more firmly into the embrace of the Christian right allies who stood by him the longest, making special reference to his "good friend" Rick Scarborough, a Texas-based pastor and activist who recently organized a conference called "The War on Christianity," at which DeLay spoke. With his new free time, DeLay might consider helping to promote Scarborough's new book, entitled (no joke) *Liberalism Kills Kids: How the Lying Left and the Silent Pulpits of America Have Unwittingly Conspired Together to Consign and Condemn an Entire Generation of Kids to Untold Misery and Tragedy.*

DELAY'S GOOD DEEDS

Conservative encomiums for the fallen Hammer came soon after DeLay's announcement. Bob Novak kicked things off with a paean to the "shrewd congressional leader" who was felled by the perfidy of underlings. Michael Barone then weighed in with a forthright defense of the K Street Project—DeLay's sustained campaign to muscle Democrats out of Washington lobbying shops and replace them with GOP foot soldiers. Finally, former DeLay aide John Feehery brought both themes together in a lengthy *Washington Post* op-ed portraying DeLay as an honorable man rendered vulnerable by the misdeeds of rogue staffers like Tony Rudy and Michael Scanlon. Unmentioned in the op-ed was that Feehery himself is a direct beneficiary of DeLay's K Street Project. When, in 2004, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) hired a Democrat as its new president, furious congressional Republicans retaliated by excising tax credits to movie studios from an international tax bill. The MPAA got the message and promised to hire several Republicans for top positions. One of those hires: John Feehery, now the MPAA's executive vice president.



ERIC PALMA; LANDOV

TALE OF TWO *POSTS*

An April 9 *Washington Post* editorial on the revelation that "Scooter" Libby leaked portions of an October 2002

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THE QUESTION: IT'S MAY! IF DICK CHENEY WERE A FLOWER, WHAT FLOWER WOULD HE BE?

"A prickly pear."
— ***David**, Flower Gallery, Washington, D.C.*



"It's tough; his character is so unlike a flower. I think of something bulky and ungraceful, like a protea."
— ***Vladimir**, Dupont Flowers, Washington, D.C.*



"A carnivorous plant of some kind ... Ideally, one that blooms at night, has an asymmetrical flower, and is partial to swamps."
— ***Michael Pollan**, author,* The Botany of Desire



National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq to Judith Miller referred to administration critics as using the news to launch "hyperbolic charges." The editorialists claimed "the public benefits" from disclosures such as the ones made by Libby. Most importantly, they harrumphed, "none of this is particularly relevant to the question of whether the grounds for war in Iraq were sound or bogus." Meanwhile, on the *Post*'s news pages, reporters noted that "one striking feature of the decision" to declassify "is that the evidence Cheney and Libby selected to share with reporters had been disproved months before." In other words, Libby was peddling a story that he knew to be false and doing so on orders from the highest officials in the land. If the *Post*'s editorialists can't see the relevance of this, they may need a class in reading comprehension.

WHO IS, UH...



It's been a rough, rough month for **Bill Frist**. His efforts to steer an immigration reform bill through the Senate that could satisfy the two GOP factions on the issue—as well as the needs of his own hoped-for presidential campaign in 2008—crumbled to pieces in a pathetic display of parliamentary ineptitude. The prospect of a Frist presidential candidacy was already achieving punch-line status—then came a crowning insult from, of all places, *Jeopardy!* The April 5 show featured a "Senior U.S. Senators" category in which contestants were given the state and asked to name the senator. Out of five states, the only one that stumped all contestants was ... Tennessee. One asked, "Who is Lamar Alexander?" The other two refrained from answering. Alex Trebek had to inform the contestants of the correct answer, adding helpfully, "He's the majority leader."

FRIENDS LIKE THESE



Jack Abramoff might have been sentenced to six years in the stern, but prison walls likely won't contain new revelations of his past shady dealings. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, Abramoff invited the Ambassador of Sudan to a Washington Redskins game in late 2001, where in a private skybox the lobbyist offered to lend his services to the Sudanese government. Abramoff's chums in the religious right also happened to be some of Sudan's most vocal, and politically powerful, critics. So, for a mere $16 million to $18 million, Abramoff offered to help relieve this pressure through his connections with the Christian Coalition (and Ralph Reed) and start a "grass-roots" campaign to improve Sudan's image among evangelicals. The deal never went through, reportedly because Abramoff couldn't guarantee results. Considering his success with Reed coordinating conservative Christian support for policies benefiting his Indian gaming clients, one wonders why Abramoff was so modest.

WHAT WOULD JUDAS DO?

In other Christianity- and PR-related news, according to a Gospel recently discovered in the Egyptian desert, Judas may not have been the cad he was cracked up to be. This Gospel, a Gnostic document from around the year 300, has Jesus assuring Judas that facilitating his crucifixion will make him the most favored of the apostles because he will have freed Christ from his corporeal prison. Considering how the last 2,000 years have gone for Judas publicity-wise, he might have, a la Cheney, seen to it that this document was leaked. And hired Jack Abramoff.

AND FINALLY

If you want to be even more embarrassed by your president than you already are, go to your computer and Google around for an April 10 video clip of Dubya tackling a question from a young woman about the conduct of private contractors in Iraq. Hint: His answer began, "Help!" **TAP**

QUIZ

Spot the fake 2006 right-wing book title

A. *The Party of Death: The Democrats, the Media, the Courts, and the Disregard for Human Life*

B. *Women Who Make the World Worse: And How Their Radical Feminist Assault Is Ruining Our Schools, Families, Military, and Sports*

C. *The Global War on Your Guns: Inside the U.N. Plan to Destroy the Bill of Rights*

D. *Liberal Fascism: The Totalitarian Temptation from Mussolini to Hillary Clinton*

E. *Fifth Columnists: Why Elite Op-Ed Writers Undermine America—and How They Get Away With It*

F. *Public Education Against America: The Hidden Agenda*

ANSWER: E. is not a real book. Authors of the other (real) titles are, respectively: A. Ramesh Ponnuru; B. Kate O'Beirne; C. Wayne LaPierre; D. Jonah Goldberg; and F. Marlin Maddoux.

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The Labour Soap Opera

BY MARK SCHMITT

LONDON IS A PLACE WHERE THOMAS FRANK'S famous book bears the title *What's the Matter with America?*, thus extending the indictment to the whole nation, and where a small American child is required to affirm that she hates George W. Bush before she can join English tykes on the jungle gym. Even so, the principal obsession is no longer the subservience of Tony Blair to Bush, but a much older soap opera, now entering its dreary tenth season: Blair versus Gordon Brown, chancellor of the exchequer and his long-anticipated successor as leader of the Labour Party and, presumptively, prime minister.

Blair versus Brown descended into real ugliness during my visit there in April, with Blair's partisans (called "madmen" by Brown's) accusing Brown of subtly trying to sabotage Labour's chances in local elections May 4, and Brown's partisans suggesting that Blair was again reneging on "The Deal" made when both men were young—that Blair would go first, lead "New Labour" to victory, and eventually yield power to Brown. Now, alternative successors are being mentioned for the first time.

The Blair-Brown deal had long interested me—as a political success story. The pairing, voluntary or not, seemed to solve two of the problems of democratic governance: the problem of diversity of viewpoints in a political party, and the problem of succession, challenges that neither major U.S. party has handled well recently. Brown and Blair unapologetically represented different viewpoints. Brown is more rooted in the traditional Labour Party vision of social democracy, and Blair more of a Clintonesque triangulator. Both have been great innovators in social policy; but Brown's innovations have sought to reduce inequality—such as "baby bonds," a stake of £250 to £500 for every child born in the U.K.—whereas Blair is more attracted to individualistic, market-based social policies. Accepting these distinctions, Blair and Brown were able to show two faces to the voters: traditional Labour voters could wait patiently for Brown while tolerating Blair, while the more upwardly mobile voters and disaffected Tories appreciated Blair's beyond-left-and-right pitch.

As American Democrats and progressives ponder the question, "What do we stand for?"—always with the unipolar Republicans as a distracting role model—let us be reminded that for a decade in the U.K., Labour has successfully managed to stand for more than one thing. And that's appropriate, as any political party in the Anglo-American winner-take-all system must represent a broad, diverse coalition.

Once upon a time, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown had a deal to make Brown next in line. But that was then.

TO OFFER BOTH CHANGE AND MORE OF the same is a rare achievement in politics. It was what was needed at the end of the eight Clinton years, and yet, Vice President Al Gore seemingly had no freedom to strike that pose. Either he would break with Clinton or stick with him. Similarly, even Senator John McCain, as I pointed out last month, doesn't seem to have any option as a presidential candidate except to present himself as a loyal clone of the unpopular incumbent. But Brown's subtle differences with Blair are already well known, his continued loyalty in some ways more notable for those differences.

I've made the case that the Blair-Brown dyad should be seen as a positive thing to a number of knowledgeable Brits aligned with neither faction, and the response has generally been that that might have been true up until two years ago. But now it's all gone too far. Now it's personal.

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party may have at last found in David Cameron its own Blair, a leader with more charisma and political adeptness than the balding young fogies Blair trounced in 2001 and 2004, and one who understands the new demographics of Great Britain.

It would be disappointing if Brown never has the chance to show what he can do with the full reins of power, for it is he who offers the ideal model for U.S. progressives: an understanding that economic growth is a necessary condition but that government must actively intervene to ensure that prosperity is broadly shared. The U.K. has experienced the longest period of sustained prosperity in its modern history, yet unlike the United States and most other western economies, since 2000—thanks to fair tax and social policies income—inequality declined, and the country made progress on Labour's promise to abolish child poverty. That achievement is Brown's, and proves that the U.S. model of radically increasing inequality is not inevitable. If Blair and Brown can cancel the soap opera before it destroys their careers, perhaps—returning the favor by which Clinton helped Blair devise the triangulations of New Labour—Brown as prime minister can help Americans see the path to a new and vigorous progressivism, in which the benefits of economic growth are broadly shared. TAP

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We're Working on Them

BY JANE HAMSHER

RIGHT-WING BLOGGERS LOVE AUTHORITY. THEY live to repeat slavishly the talking points of the Bush administration, bowing down like a pack of authoritarian cargo cultists before the words and images of the Jeep-in-Chief. Left-wing bloggers, on the other hand, are a notoriously unruly bunch, and they spend much of their energy in a steel-cage death match with corporate media journalists they consider compromised and conscripted by the GOP. It is not a relationship fused with an abundance of mutual affection.

Liberal bloggers consider themselves media watchdogs. The journalists they cover consider them ankle-biting amateurs. But as paper gives way to pixels, the two groups are being forced into ever-closer proximity. This two-way street often scares mainstream journalists accustomed to one-way, we-speak-you-listen communication, and the fractious relationship between traditional journalists and the folks whom New York University journalism professor Jay Rosen calls "the people formerly known as the audience" is becoming the stuff of headlines.

Bill O'Reilly nearly came unglued earlier this year at the specter of what he called online terrorists funded by liberal billionaires attacking *The Washington Post*. Here on planet Earth, however, the actual incident involved a bit of misinformation printed by the *Post*'s ombudsman, Deborah Howell, who made the claim that Jack Abramoff gave money to both Democrats and Republicans. In fact, he never gave money to Democrats, and bloggers were only too happy to point this out. Rather than make a correction, the *Post* chose a "hang-tough" strategy that might have worked for them only a few years ago. The paper's online editor, Jim Brady, took to smelling salts and the fainting couch, calling the *Post*'s online critics uncivilized barbarians full of hate speech. The bloggers were remarkably unfazed and held fast. A week later, the *Post* was forced to retract.

Brady got his digs in two months later, however, with the hiring of Ben Domenech, a right-wing blogger from RedState.org who thought even less of liberal bloggers than Brady did. Since this was something the Bush administration had been pushing for, it must have seemed puzzling to the *Post* when liberal bloggers started dancing around and singing "Oh Happy Day." But they knew something Brady didn't, and soon produced the proof—Domenech had a history of making racist statements on RedState; he called Coretta Scott King a "Communist" on the day of her funeral and said it was inappropriate for George Bush to attend. Within 48 hours of his hiring, liberal bloggers had also uncovered numerous instances of plagiarism by Domenech in *The National Review* and other publications. This time, the "hang-tough" posture only lasted a day. Brady was forced to fire Domenech and publicly thank the bloggers (no doubt through gritted teeth) for doing his job for him.

Mainstream media please take note: Liberal bloggers are here to help you. Well, for the most part ...

WHAT ARE THE LARGER IMPLICATIONS for the world of journalism? Well, aside from being insufferable pains in the ass, these modern-day I.F. Stones would probably make certain right-wing scams very difficult to pull off today. Take Whitewater. This "scandal" consumed the headlines from day one of the Clinton administration, as the press, seeking to fill column inches each day and get their stories on page A1, accepted the fabricated assertions of political operatives with little or no skepticism. Such a hijacking would be impossible now—it's much harder for the press to accept the wholesale whoppers of political operatives knowing that a bunch of itchy, trigger-fingered keyboardists are connected via the Internet and willing to sift through enormous amounts of data for documentation with which to counter spin and disinformation.

The bias of the media has lurched horrifically to the right. Mention the word "liberal" to journalists, and watch their eyes bug out and their hair stand on end like Lou Dobbs contemplating the mongrel horde rushing over the border. It's understandable that they now feel themselves wedged into a tight spot as they experience liberal online pushback.

But bloggers and their readers are much more than just liberal battering rams. They act as analysts as they help to shape the dominant narratives and sort through ever-accumulating piles of information. They search for patterns, inconsistencies, and bias. Their narratives increasingly feed back out into corporate news media and help determine the shape of future reporting. With their budgets decimated by consolidation and corporatization, you'd think professional journalists would be grateful for the free help.

Funnily enough, they're not quite there yet. But we're working on them.

Jane Hamsher *is an author, producer, and blogger at* firedoglake.com.

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Dispatches

"In the Netherlands, Sarkozy-esque triangulation has tainted one of the continent's best chances of creating a pluralistic, Europeanized Islam."

— PAGE 17



Sandinismo Nuevo: Herty Lewites, shown here last January, is a different kind of Sandinista.

OSWALDO RIVAS/REUTERS/LANDOV

NICARAGUA

THE NEW GUY

Daniel Ortega plots a comeback—but an unlikely foe stands in his way.

BY STEPHEN KINZER

MANAGUA, NICARAGUA—

Within hours after the left-wing indigenous leader Evo Morales was elected president of Bolivia last December, another outspoken critic of American power in the hemisphere, Daniel Ortega, sent him a message of "revolutionary jubilation." As the head of Nicaragua's Sandinista government in the 1980s, Ortega led his country in a war against CIA-sponsored insurgents. Now, sensing the wind of the resurgent Latin American left at his back, he is running for president again.

If Ortega wins the November election, he will bring populist rule back to Central America for the first time since his previous presidency, which ended in 1990. But Ortega faces a serious challenge from within the Sandinista Party, and from a most unlikely figure—Herty Lewites, the balding, 66-year-old son of a Jewish candy manufacturer who landed in Nicaragua in the 1920s after fleeing his homeland. If elected, Lewites would be a very different kind of Sandinista president from the ones Americans remember in the 1980s.

For more than a decade, Nicaragua has been dominated by two old-style *caudillos*, Ortega and another former president, Arnoldo Aleman, of the Liberal Party. Both men now aspire to return to the presidency. Both, however, face extraordinary challenges from within their own ranks. The conflict within Sandinista ranks is especially bitter and could erupt in violence.

Ortega is no longer a popular figure in Nicaragua. In one recent poll, 69 percent of Nicaraguans said they would not vote for him under any circumstance. But he has a strong political base and has designed a political system that makes him a formidable candidate despite weaknesses that have led to his defeat in each of the last three presidential elections.

Through a series of political maneuvers, Ortega and Aleman have taken control of both the Supreme Court and the electoral council. Aleman hopes to use his power over these bodies to reverse his conviction on corruption charges and overturn the 20-year jail sentence that he was given in 2003. That would allow him to emerge from house arrest and run for president again. Ortega, who has already shown his power over the court system by arranging for pro-Sandinista judges to absolve him of charges that he sexually abused his stepdaughter for years, now wants to use that power to shape the November election result.

Lewites recently completed a highly successful term as mayor of Managua, during which he impressed many voters with his pragmatism and willingness to hire competent administrators regardless of their political background—something highly unusual in Nicaragua. His folksy, can-do style has made him the country's most popular politician. He describes his ideology as "a new, open, modern, democratic *Sandinismo*."

Lewites has sterling Sandinista credentials. He became a guerrilla while still a teenager. In the 1970s, he directed a gun-smuggling operation, bringing arms from the U.S. to Nicaragua in false-bottomed trucks. U.S. agents finally caught him, and he spent several months in a federal prison in California. After the Sandinistas came

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to power in 1979, he was named minister of tourism, and brought desperately needed hard currency into government coffers by opening a series of "dollar stores" where diplomats and other foreigners could buy imported goods that were otherwise unavailable in Nicaragua. Today, some of the leading *comandantes* who ran the Sandinista regime in the 1980s, including Henry Ruiz, Luis Carrion, and Victor Tirado, are supporting his campaign.

I visited Lewites at his home, where large, colorful paintings by artists from Nicaragua and other Latin American countries cover the walls. He told me that he "was, is, and will die a Sandinista," but said the party "has been a dictatorship for the 25 years that Daniel Ortega has been secretary general.

"The new Sandinista movement is center-left, wants stable relations with the United States instead of confrontation, and good relations with all countries," he said. "Don't confuse *Sandinismo* with *Danielismo*."

Nicaragua is alive with rumors that Ortega will use his power to deny Lewites a place on the ballot. Such a drastic step would certainly create a backlash. Several foreign leaders who are friendly to Ortega have warned him that the world will not recognize the election unless all candidates are given a chance to run. Lewites, whose aides include veteran Sandinistas with rich experience in street politics, told me he would forcefully resist any effort to ban his candidacy.

"I will bring this country to a total standstill," he vows. "I'm not for violence, but things can happen when crowds of angry people come together. If I'm cut out of the election, I'm not just going to sit back and take it."

As the Sandinista front splits, the same thing is happening within the country's other main party, the Liberals. Aleman's epic corruption and autocratic style have set off a rebellion in his own party. The challenger, Eduardo Montealegre, is a Harvard-educated banker from a well-known Nicaraguan family whose calls for economic development have struck a resonant chord among many Nicaraguans. He and Lewites have very different styles, but both have become popular for the same reason. They are rebels against a corrupt system that most Nicaraguans have come to detest.

A new civic group, the Movement for Nicaragua, has emerged to protest the strongman-style rule of the two former presidents. It has drawn tens of thousands of people to protest marches. They carry banners with slogans like "No to the Two-Headed Dictatorship of Ortega and Aleman" and, on a coffin shrouded in black, "We Are Burying the Past."

***"The new Sandinista movement is center-left and wants stable relations with the U.S.," Lewites says. "Don't confuse* Sandinismo *with* Danielismo."**

Outsiders may view the coming election as a way to measure the strength of leftist ideology in Central America, but Nicaraguans look forward to it for a very different reason. Many dare to hope that if both insurgent candidates defeat the entrenched powers, the system of strongman rule that has long plagued this country may be greatly weakened or even broken. "This coming year will be crucial in Nicaraguan history," said Klaus Stadhagen, a businessman active in the Movement for Nicaragua. "It will determine whether the *caudillo* system lives or dies in this country."

Leaders of the Movement for Nicaragua have plans to call a "mega-march" the moment a court removes either Lewites or Montealegre from the ballot. "If either of the two is prevented from running, our movement will take to the streets," said one of its leaders, Carlos Tunnerman, who was the Sandinistas' ambassador to the United States in the 1980s. "Why have an election if you take away people's right to vote for the most popular candidates?"

The novelist Sergio Ramirez, who served as Ortega's vice president in the 1980s but has since broken with him, told me he expects President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, and perhaps even Morales of Bolivia, to do whatever they can to help Ortega's presidential campaign. He also said he fears that if Ortega does not win, he may throw the country into chaos. "The biggest question facing Nicaragua is not whether Herty can win, but whether Daniel Ortega will agree to give up power peacefully," Ramirez warns.

American officials are doing all they can to weaken the two strongmen. During a visit to Managua in October, deputy secretary of state Robert Zoellick bluntly condemned the "corrupt pact" that binds them together. He called Aleman "a convicted political official who stole tens of millions, if not more," and asserted that Ortega "has never accepted democracy." A victory by either one, he suggested, would lead the United States to cut much of its aid to Nicaragua.

Nor does the United States look favorably on Lewites, who, although he may be the instrument that ends Ortega's political career, is nonetheless an unapologetic Sandinista. One American official told me that the State Department considers Lewites "an erratic personality" who is only "marginally better" than Ortega. No one in Nicaragua's political class doubts that Montealegre is Washington's preferred candidate.

Some Nicaraguans say that by inserting itself so forcefully into the current political campaign, the United States perpetuates the image that it considers Nicaragua a kind of protectorate. That, they warn, feeds anti-Americanism and plays into the Sandinistas' hands. "This insistence on pressuring us now is a mistake," Luis Humberto Guzman, a former president of the Nicaraguan Congress, told me over lunch in Managua. "It's not in Nicaragua's interest, and it's not in the long-term interest of the United States."

During the 1980s, Ronald Reagan, asserting that the Sandinista regime was a fundamental threat to the United States and to world peace, dispatched the CIA to sponsor an insurrection against it. That insurrection took thousands of lives and

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devastated the country. Ultimately, the Sandinistas were deposed, although that happened in an election after the contra rebels had agreed to stop fighting. Very soon afterward, the United States completely lost interest in Nicaragua. This made painfully clear that the American goal here was simply to depose a regime, not to help a wretched country emerge from its misery.

Today, Nicaragua competes with Haiti to lead Latin America in most things that are bad, from unemployment to infant mortality. Forty-five percent of the population lives on less than $2 per day. Over the past decade, several hundred thousand Nicaraguans have emigrated, mostly to the United States and Costa Rica, and without the money they send to relatives back home, the country might fall into complete economic collapse. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), an astonishing 27 percent of Nicaraguans, a total of 1.4 million people, suffer from malnutrition. According to the FAO representative in Nicaragua, Loy Van Crowder, this is a fundamental cause of the country's underdevelopment.

"Hungry people don't work," Van Crowder asserts. "Hungry people have more health problems. We know that hungry children don't learn. This means that for this country to advance economically, there has to be investment in programs that feed people."

Although the United States is again focused on Nicaragua, its principal interest is the same as it was 20 years ago: defeating Daniel Ortega. If Ortega loses the presidential election, America will almost certainly shift its focus elsewhere. No powerful figure in Washington has suggested that the United States might instead make a long-term commitment to stopping Nicaragua's slide from poverty into dangerous instability.

The most formidable leader Nicaragua ever had, José Santos Zelaya, was overthrown in an American-backed rebellion in 1909 after he challenged the power of American banks, mining companies, and lumber concerns. That sparked a rebellion that could be suppressed only by the United States Marines. The Marines occupied Nicaragua for most of the next 20 years. After they left, the United States remained the dominant force in Nicaragua, providing crucial support to the Somoza family's 40-year dictatorship. The Somozas fell in 1979, overthrown by the Sandinista Front, which the United States spent much of the 1980s trying to crush.

Yet despite the fact that Americans are, in considerable measure, responsible for Nicaragua's generations of misery, they have never tried seriously to help resolve the country's deep-seated problems. If they had maintained a constructive focus on this country and allowed it to develop without interference, it might have become prosperous, truly democratic, and a stabilizing force in Central America. Instead it is just the opposite. **TAP**

Stephen Kinzer *covered Central America for* The New York Times *in the 1980s. His new book is* Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq *(Times Books).*

THE PHILIPPINES

POWER OUTAGE

Twenty years after People Power, things look like they did before it.

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES—

For a man who might be jailed at any moment, Harry Roque Jr., appeared very relaxed when I met him in Manila in early March. Dressed in a white barong tagalog—the long, delicately embroidered shirt worn untucked by Philippine men—he welcomed me into his law office, crowded with stacks of books on Philippine constitutional law. "Three days ago, it was broadcast that I had been arrested," he said. "Everyone was calling me, but I was still here." A laugh boomed out of his jiggling stomach.

Still, Roque was on a list of some 200 people who could be arrested at any time. In late February, Philippine president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared a state of national emergency, citing an alleged coup plot against her. In coordination with the emergency, she created lists of people, including many of her political enemies, supposedly involved in the plot; these targets could be arrested for rebellion and sedition at any time. The Philippine police also raided the offices of Manila's *Daily Tribune*, a newspaper normally opposed to the government, and also attempted to arrest five opposition congresspeople, who took refuge in the Philippines' legislative building. For his part, Roque, a longtime activist, was leading a constitutional challenge to the president's emergency law; hence the threat of arrest.

Macapagal-Arroyo's actions were an unfortunate anniversary present to her country—and a sign that the nation's efforts to promote democracy have largely backfired. Twenty years ago, in February 1986, millions of unarmed demonstrators launched the Philippines' "People Power" revolution and toppled authoritarian ruler Ferdinand Marcos. People Power would become a model for democratic revolutions around the world: It relied upon groups of activists uniting into a broader movement and then convincing military leaders to abandon the dictator. The movement even pioneered the use of color, with People Power demonstrators clothing themselves in yellow, a precursor of Rose and Orange revolutions in the former Soviet states.

After deposing Marcos, the Philippines seemed poised to take off. It boasted a literacy rate of more than 90 percent, including many fluent English-speakers, which is why American companies now use the country for outsourced call centers. It also had a highly educated elite, a core of activists committed to democratic rule, and one of the freest presses in Asia.

But since 1986, the Philippines' political system and economy have disintegrated, with the emergency law only the latest meltdown—a warning to other na-

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tions, like Thailand, that seem enthralled by protests. Today, the country is so politically vibrant that it's constantly distracted by wild democracy, street protests, and Hollywood-style political campaigns, with little focus on development. President Corazon Aquino, who led the 1986 movement, survived numerous coup attempts. In 2001, Macapagal-Arroyo became president when street protests nicknamed People Power 2, combined with the military, toppled elected president Joseph Estrada. Three years later, similar demonstrations and military unrest almost brought Macapagal-Arroyo down.

What's more, the Philippine economy has stagnated. Economic growth barely keeps pace with population growth, and a debt and fiscal crisis looms; in 2004, the speaker of the Philippine House of Representatives undertook a charity drive for the national treasury, asking people to donate to the state budget like it was a Salvation Army fund. Forty percent of the country lives below the poverty line, and in Manila I watched tens of thousands of the poor climbing a garbage dump, scavenging through the trash to survive. Manila residents have grown so desperate that 30,000 of them recently stampeded the gate of a reality TV show giving away cash prizes, crushing 70 people to death. At the same time, the Philippine ombudsman's office reports that the country lost $48 billion in revenue in graft over the past 20 years, and companies needing contracts roam the halls of Congress there with envelopes full of cash to stuff into congresspeople's desks.

Saddest of all, many Filipinos I met on a recent visit longed for the Marcos era. "We have too much democracy here," Jose V. Romero Jr., a former Philippine diplomat with weary, deep-set eyes, told me. "There were two good things about the [Marcos] era—they got rid of Congress and they got rid of the media."

Part of the problem is that in the wake of 1986, many Philippine activists wanted the most direct democracy possible, and associated democratic rule with political systems the United States first brought to the country, a former colony, long before Marcos. The post-Marcos Philippines implemented a presidential system like the United States', thinking that an executive would be most accountable to the people, and then limited Philippine presidents to one term. As longtime Philippines watcher Anthony Spaeth notes, consequently the Philippine electorate is never able to vote presidents out of office, prompting the public to look to street protests like the 2001 demonstrations against Estrada, or to hopes of military intervention, to change their government.



Un-Monumental Change: A protestor, and the People Power statue

Unsurprisingly, the constant possibility of protests slows normal policy-making. Politicians must always worry about being toppled, and sometimes overreact to the pressure, as Macapagal-Arroyo has done. Worse, because Filipinos constantly rely on people power to change governments, they've invested little in building democratic institutions (businessmen told me the judiciary is so backlogged it can take years to complete a decision) or in promoting equitable development. "We had political democracy but no economic democracy, and now we're in a mess here," said Leticia Ramos-Shahani, a former Philippine senator. The national land reform program has been dogged by scandal, and a handful of powerful families still dominate the highly unequal economy. Everyone else essentially scavenges.

Focused on creating the most direct democracy, the post-Marcos Philippines also built a winner-take-all system for most congressional seats. This has led to astronomical spending on congressional campaigns—reportedly, some $500,000 per campaign in the Manila area, in a country with a per capita GDP less than one-eighth of that of the United States. Since only the rich can afford such campaigns, and the country has not built a large middle class, Congress is dominated by two groups. One consists of scions of the country's traditionally powerful clans: According to a study by one of the country's leading investigative journalists, in the Congress elected in 2001, 61 percent of representatives came from this handful of clans. The other consists of entertainers like Estrada, who can mount glamorous campaign spectacles or films about themselves to promote their campaigns. European observers following the 2004 Philippines election told local reporters, "It's like watching a carnival or a festival." Since the February crackdown, Macapagal-Arroyo produced a documentary to explain to the public why she declared emergency law—as if George W. Bush produced a jazzy film to explain Guantanamo detentions and then aired it on HBO.

Once in office, Philippine legislators, like U.S. congressional appropriators, can rely upon government funds to cement their positions in power. To spread state funds more broadly, a reaction to Marcos'

MIKE F. ALQUINTO/EPA/LANDOV

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personal kleptocracy—and to spread the wealth among legislators—the post-Marcos Congress gave each legislator control of portions of the national infrastructure budget. The legislators then distribute to associates and favored companies, sometimes even holding dance parties where they toss wads of cash to the crowd.

The U.S. system of pork may not be so blatant, but there is a certain resemblance between the two countries, including the nightly "Crossfire"-style scream shows on Manila television and the country's media-centered politics. But grafting American-style politics and media coverage, without the institutions underpinning hundreds of years of U.S. democracy, is dangerous. It's why smart new democracies in Europe and Africa increasingly prefer the tamer parliamentary model. "We got the American style but nothing else," said Romero.

All the turmoil not only undermines politics and development. It also creates apathy and cynicism among young Filipinos, who talk about "people power fatigue." In one poll, one-third of Filipinos said they want to leave the country. "If there was a People Power 3, I think I just wouldn't pay attention," one young Filipino journalist admitted.

On my only day off in Manila, I visited the Ayala Museum, a swank, glass-and-steel building with a floor of high-tech exhibits on Philippine history. I wandered into an elaborate multimedia presentation about the country's resistance to authoritarian rule. Though I'd seen old coverage of the People Power movement, the video footage of 1986 moved me more than I'd expected. Crowds so large the sweep of the camera cannot capture them fill the main park in Manila. When Marcos brings Philippine troops into the capital, students and nuns and average workers overwhelm the troops, pleading with them to unite with their fellow Filipinos until the soldiers hand over their weapons and step into the crowd.

In front of me in the screening room, a middle-aged Filipino woman leading a school group of teenagers with spiky hair and midriff-baring shirts could not control her emotions. As the height of the presentation, she started singing the Philippines anthem.

I glance around the room. Most of her students were not even looking at the screen. Instead, they stare down, looking intently at objects in their hands. When I peer over the shoulder of one student, I see they are furiously sending mobile phone text messages. **TAP**

Joshua Kurlantzick *is Special Correspondent for* The New Republic *and a Visiting Scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.*

EUROPE

CONTINENTAL DRIFT

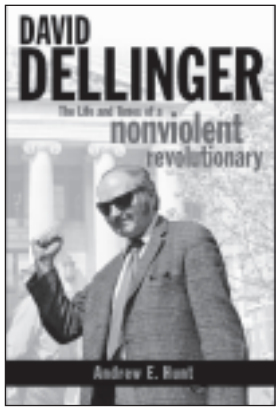
Demagogues and the dangerous tide of anti-immigrant populism

BY MARK LEON GOLDBERG

Silvio Berlusconi was trailing his center-left rival, Romano Prodi, in polls preceding Italy's general elections on April 9 and 10. So, less than two weeks before the vote, he did what most politicians in such situations do: He moved to shore up the base—his allies in the hard right Italian Northern League. His chosen method? He aimed his crosshairs on the country's Muslim immigrants. "We don't want Italy to become a multiethnic, multicultural country," he told the state-run radio in late March. "We are proud of our traditions."

In this, Berlusconi is representative of many politicians, particularly on the center-right, in western Europe, for whom race baiting has become increasingly profitable at the polls. In nearly every election on continental Europe since September 11, center-right parties have adopted a two-pronged approach

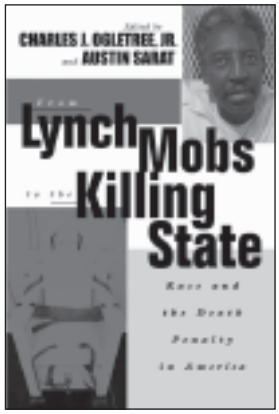
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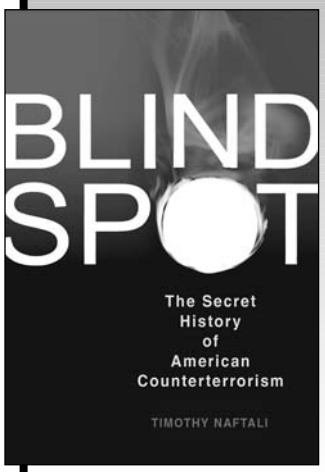
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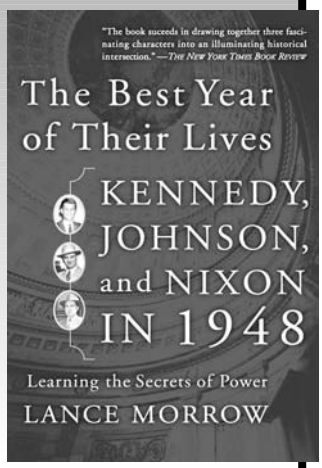
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to Muslims in Europe: First, paint Islam as an uncompromising religion; second, describe Muslim men under 30 as hooligans, terrorists, or both.

This rhetoric can be partly explained by the dynamics of proportional representation in places like Italy, Denmark, and the Netherlands, where the center right must compete with right-wing populists that feed off growing public hostility to Muslim immigrants. Yet while politically expedient, it does little to address the stunted prospects of a generation of Muslim youth who are now turning against the countries in which they were reared. So long as the European right continues to substitute high-octane oratory for pragmatic solutions to integrating Europe's disenfranchised Muslim immigrant population, they will be a singularly pernicious influence on European (and by extension, American) security and well-being.

THE TERM "IMMIGRANT" CONNOTES different things in continental Europe than in the United States. Generally speaking, in Europe it refers not just to emigrants from foreign countries, but to their children and in some cases grandchildren as well. It is the progeny of North Africans and Turks who were recruited to fill Europe's post-war labor shortages in the 1950s and 1960s—the so-called second-generation immigrants—who are the target of popular hostility in Europe today.

In most cases, European governments recruited their parents as guest workers but made no conscious effort to integrate them into the European social model. For their part, many in the first generation did little to embrace European values, though they had no plans of leaving the continent. When Europe's industrial base declined in the 1970s and 1980s, many of these low-wage jobs disappeared. The workers, who by then had brought their families, remained.

For decades, politicians on both the left and right were content to ignore the problems associated with a growing and segregated underclass of Muslim immigrants. Meanwhile, the children born to these imported workers grew up in suburban ghettoes and now exhibit pathologies associated with segregation and urban poverty. In the Netherlands, for example, the unemployment rate of Dutch Muslims is 60 percent higher than the national average. In France, where Muslims make up 10 percent of the population, unofficial estimates indicate that more than 60 percent of prison inmates are Muslim.

Against this backdrop, and as members of this generation reached their teens and 20s, a Europeanized version of the fabled super-predator began to appear. As in the United States, the right began capitalizing on popular fears of dark-skinned young men and set the tone of the political debate. Add a dose of popular antipathy to Islam following September 11 (and the very real presence of a cadre of radical clerics in Europe), and you have a recipe for a new dynamic of right-wing populism in Europe.

Denmark's November 2001 election was a watershed moment. A Willie Horton-style advertising campaign criticizing the lenient sentence handed to second-generation Palestinians convicted of rape galvanized right-wing support for the center-right Liberal Party's anti-immigration platform. When the Liberals' Anders Fogh Rasmussen became prime minister, his minority governing coalition's greatest ally became the nationalist Danish People's Party, whose leader Pia Kjaersgaard has at various times called asylum seekers untrained illiterates and posited that the accumulation of Muslims leads to mass rapes. Together, Rasmussen's minority government and the Danish People Party possess an absolute majority in Parliament. Soon after the election, they passed Europe's most restrictive anti-immigrant laws to date.

Four years of this governing coalition had a dampening effect on integrating Muslims in Denmark, and went a long way toward increasing racial tensions there. These tensions grew to a fever pitch in February when the riots over the infamous cartoons that skewered the prophet Mohammed erupted in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Yet it was not Muslims in Gaza or Karachi that these cartoons were meant to provoke, but those in Copenhagen. Rasmussen played this

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controversy masterfully. He rejected a middle ground like that adopted by the Bush administration, which defended the right of a paper to publish the cartoons but complained about their mean-spirited tone. Rasmussen accused his domestic critics, virtually none of whom questioned the right of a paper to publish what it pleases, of being insufficiently pro-free speech.

Even in countries where the far right does not hold a controlling stake in national parliaments, the desire to appease right-wing populists still runs strong among ambitious politicians. French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy, for example, has promoted sensible integration policies, like expanding affirmative-action programs that are now being tested in some universities. He also appointed France's only Muslim prefect (the chief federal administrator of the region) and oversaw the creation of an official Muslim Council of France to attend to the needs of France's five million Muslims, like certifying *halal* and arranging army and prison chaplaincies.

Yet, despite these policies, Sarkozy remains public enemy number one to many French Muslims. During last autumn's riots he pledged to "karcherise" the "rabble" from the streets. (Karcher is the well-known brand name of a high-pressure washer used, among other things, to clean bird feces from the sidewalk.) "I like Sarkozy's policies," says Julianne Smith, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and coauthor of a report on the nexus of Muslim integration and security policy in Europe. "But his rhetoric only reinforces a sense of embattlement felt by French Muslims."

In the Netherlands, this kind of Sarkozy-esque triangulation has tainted one of the continent's best chances of creating a pluralistic, Europeanized Islam. In late 2004, the Dutch center-right Christian Democrats proposed to subsidize an Islamic theology program in Amsterdam's largest private university. The opposition on the left responded to this idea with enthusiasm. But, fearful of looking "soft" on the Muslim question, the left sought to outflank the Christian Democrats by simultaneously proposing a ban on all foreign imams, who were considered under the influence of foreign governments like Saudi Arabia (some undoubtedly are).



AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO

Culture Clash: Danish Muslims protesting in Copenhagen last October

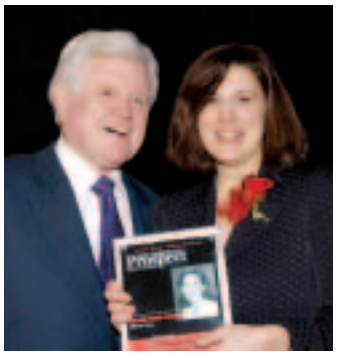
Eventually, their proposal was found to contravene Dutch law and was never enacted. But the damage had already been done. Dutch Muslims were furious that their religious leaders would be subject to a double standard, and a promising remedy to wean Dutch imams from foreign financial and intellectual dependency got off to a poisoned start.

The prospect of a state of sustained antagonism between European governments and their Muslim minorities has terrorism experts worried. In an authoritative study of 373 terrorists arrested or killed in Europe and the United States from 1993 through 2004, Robert Leiken and Steven Brooke of the Nixon Center found that one-quarter were Western European nationals. These vary from students of the London School of Economics to career petty criminals. "Class is not the determinant," says Daniel Benjamin, the former director of counterterrorism on the National Security Council in the Clinton administration and coauthor of *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting It Right*. "But if you look at the personal biographies of those who have been arrested on terrorism charges in Europe, it's clear that being alienated and denied opportunity heightens the threat."

Though the situation in the aggregate is rather bleak, scattered local initiatives that work with, rather than against, local Muslim communities have shown promise. One borough of Amsterdam, for example, entered into legal contracts with its three local mosques, spelling out the obligation of the mosque to the community, and vice versa. Per the contract, the mosques receive city funding for some of their social service projects. In return, mosque leaders identify and monitor youth they feel might be drifting toward radicalism. Further, the borough enlists the mosques' support to enroll young immigrant mothers in civic education and parenting classes.

But so long as stoking popular resentment against Muslims remains politically profitable in national politics, these programs are not likely to move beyond the local level. "You cannot build a collaborative relationship with people you waste no time insulting," says Jytte Klausen, author of an exhaustive study of Europe's Muslim middle class, *The Challenge of Islam: Politics and Religion in Western Europe*. Unfortunately, a tragic number of European politicians are content to sacrifice a dose of enlightened self- interest for derogatory sound bytes. **TAP**

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Ted and Vicki Reggie Kennedy



Tom Glynn



Al Franken and Michael Tomasky



Diane Straus Tucker



William Julius Wilson and Paul Starr



Bill Harris and Rep. Rosa DeLauro



Robie Harris



On January 20, the *Prospect* held its first gala awards dinner. The event, held at Boston's Fairmont Copley Hotel, had several purposes:

- to celebrate liberal heroes among us
- to mark 15 years of successful publication
- to thank Bob Kuttner, who is stepping down as *Prospect* president to write and edit for the magazine, and to welcome our new president and publisher, Diane Straus Tucker
- and to raise money for our writing fellows program and investigative journalism.

At a moment when conservatives have the levers of government, it is worth pausing to mark liberal leaders who are there for the long run. Our honorees were:

Tom Glynn, who has demonstrated stunning leadership helping large public and community institutions serve the public interest.

Bill and Robie Harris, one of the nation's leading activists against child poverty, and a great crusader for free expression, respectively.

Victoria Reggie Kennedy, a national leader in reducing handgun violence and the first lady of liberal Massachusetts.

Rocío Sáenz, a leader of SEIU's Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles, Boston, and nationally.



Rocío Sáenz

William Julius Wilson, a leading scholar of poverty and race, and a founding contributing editor of the *Prospect*.

We also gave our first institutional award to **Air America Radio**, represented by **Al Franken**.

Our celebration attracted 500 people and netted more than $530,000 for the *Prospect*. Thanks to everyone who donated, to event producer **Liz Page**, and especially to the evening's indefatigable co-chairs, **Steve Grossman** and **Shanti Fry**.

Watch for announcements of future *Prospect* awards dinners.

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Co-chair Steve Grossman, Vicki Reggie Kennedy, Bob Kuttner, and co-chair Shanti Fry

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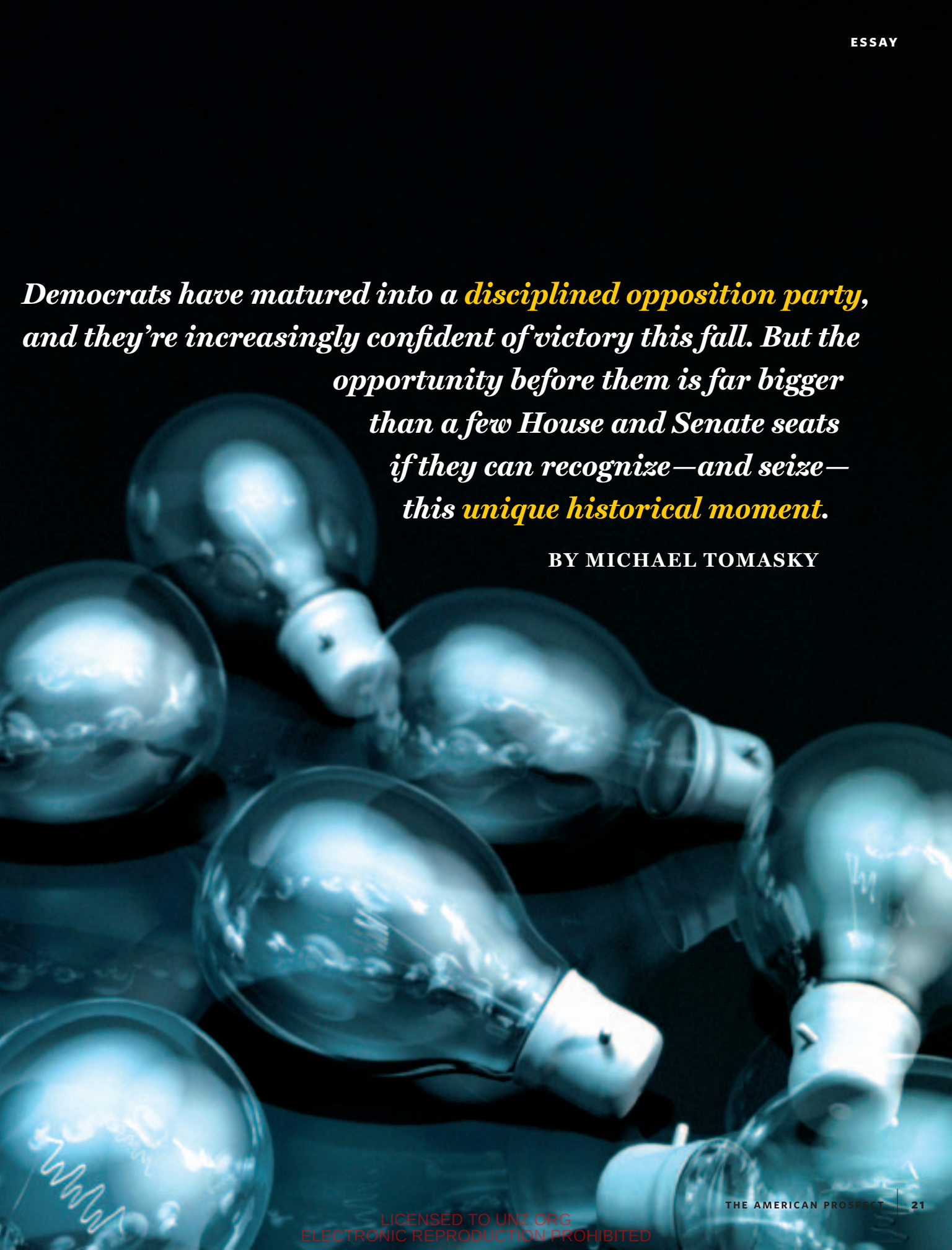
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Party *in search of a Notion*



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Democrats have matured into a disciplined opposition party, and they're increasingly confident of victory this fall. But the opportunity before them is far bigger than a few House and Senate seats if they can recognize—and seize—this unique historical moment.

BY MICHAEL TOMASKY

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THE DEMOCRATS ARE FEELING UPBEAT THESE DAYS, AND WHY NOT? The Republican president and vice president have lost the country's confidence. The Republican-controlled Congress is a sump of corruption, sycophancy, and broken principle. Races in the midterm election that Democratic leaders wouldn't have dreamed of a few months ago are in play (the Senate seat in Tennessee!). A recent poll showed Democrats with a gaping 16-point lead over Republicans this fall. Seizing on the issues of corruption and incompetence, the party might even take back the House or the Senate—or both.

The prevailing conventional wisdom in Washington—that the Democrats have no idea what they stand for—has recently been put to the test in persuasive ways. In an important piece in the May issue of *The Washington Monthly*, Amy Sullivan demonstrates that the Democrats have in fact become a disciplined and effective opposition party. From their Social Security victory to George W. Bush's backing down on his post-Katrina changes to the Davis-Bacon law to the Dubai ports deal, the Democrats have dealt the administration a series of defeats—each of which took a reflexive media, still accustomed to hitting F9 to spit out the words "Democrats in disarray," by complete surprise. More than that, the Democrats *do* have ideas; it's just that no one bothers to cover them.

The party has discipline, a tactical strategy as the opposition, and a more than respectable roster of policy proposals waiting to be considered should Democrats become the majority again. It's quite different from, say, three years ago. But let's not get carried away. There remains a missing ingredient—*the* crucial ingredient of politics, the factor that helps unite a party (always a coalition of warring interests), create majorities, and force the sort of paradigm shifts that happened in 1932 and 1980. It's the factor they need to think about if their goal is not merely to win elections but to govern decisively after winning them.

What the Democrats still don't have is a philosophy, a big idea that unites their proposals and converts them from a hodgepodge of narrow and specific fixes into a vision for society. Indeed, the party and the constellation of interests around it don't even think in philosophical terms and haven't for quite some time. There's a reason for this: They've all been trained to believe—by the media, by their pollsters—that their philosophy is an electoral loser. Like the dogs in the famous "learned helplessness" psychological experiments of the 1960s—the dogs were administered electrical shocks from which they could escape, but from which, after a while, they didn't even try to, instead crouching in the corner in resignation and fear—the Democrats have given up attempting big ideas. Any effort at doing so, they're convinced, will result in electrical (and electoral) shock.

But is that as true as it appears? Certainly, today's Democrats can't simply return to the philosophy that was defeated in the late 1970s. But at the same time, let's recognize a new historical moment when we see one: Today, for the first time since 1980, it is *conservative* philosophy that is being discredited (or rather, is discrediting itself) on a scale liberals wouldn't have dared imagine a few years ago. An opening now exists, as it hasn't in a very long time, for the Democrats to be the visionaries. To seize this moment, the Democrats need to think differently—to stop focusing on their grab bag of small-bore proposals that so often seek not to offend and that accept conservative terms of debate. And to do that, they need to begin by looking to their history, for in that history there is an idea about liberal governance that amounts to more than the million-little-pieces, interest-group approach to politics that has recently come under deserved scrutiny and that can clearly offer the most compelling progressive response to the radical individualism of the Bush era.

FOR MANY YEARS—DURING THEIR YEARS OF DOMINANCE and success, the period of the New Deal up through the first part of the Great Society—the Democrats practiced a brand of liberalism quite different from today's. Yes, it certainly sought to expand both rights and prosperity. But it did something more: That liberalism was built around the idea—the philosophical principle—that citizens should be called upon to look beyond their own self-interest and work for a greater common interest.

This, historically, is the moral basis of liberal governance—not justice, not equality, not rights, not diversity, not government, and not even prosperity or opportunity. Liberal governance is about demanding of citizens that they balance self-interest with common interest. Any rank-and-file liberal is a liberal because she or he somehow or another, through reading or experience or both, came to believe in this principle. And every leading Democrat became a Democrat because on some level, she or he believes this, too.

I remember my moment of epiphany clearly. It was early 1981; Ronald Reagan had taken office. I was toying, at the time, with some conservative notions—not because I believed them, but mostly to engage in that time-honored sport of 20-year-old men everywhere: to traduce the old man. Reagan had just fired the air-traffic controllers. Dad and I were in the car, our Ford Granada, driving somewhere; I said (I cringe to confess this in print) something about the strike being illegal—Reagan's line, then being aped on television by such TV loudmouths as existed

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in that distant age. "Michael," he thundered (and he could thunder, all right!), "*all* strikes are illegal! That's part of the point!" Hmmm. It hadn't quite occurred to me that maybe there was more to the story than the television savants were letting on. He'd overstated the case a bit (all strikes aren't illegal), but in doing so, my father had asked me to *think*, and his request led me to consider things in a light I hadn't before—about the PATCO workers, yes; but about history and money and power, about the mine workers so central to the place where I grew up (Morgantown, West Virginia) and to my father's life (he was a United Mine Workers shop steward as a young man, before he got his law degree); about the precept that real thought and engagement on my part required looking beyond first assumptions, examining a problem from points of view other than my own, and considering any action's impact on the whole society.

This is the only justification leaders can make to citizens for liberal governance, really: That all are being asked to contribute to a project larger than themselves.

In terms of political philosophy, this idea of citizens sacrificing for and participating in the creation of a common good has a name: civic republicanism. It's the idea, which comes to us from sources such as Rousseau's social contract and some of James Madison's contributions to the Federalist Papers, that for a republic to thrive, leaders must create and nourish a civic sphere in which citizens are encouraged to think broadly about what will sustain that republic and to work together to achieve common goals. This is what Dad asked me to understand that day in our Granada.

THIS IS WHAT DEMOCRATS USED TO ASK OF PEOPLE. Political philosophers argue about when they stopped; Michael Sandel believes that republicanism died with the New Deal. But for me, it's clear that the great period of liberal hegemony in this country was, in fact, a period when citizens were asked to contribute to a project larger than their own well-being. And, crucially, it was a period when citizens (a majority of them, at least) *reciprocally understood themselves to have a stake in this larger project*. The New Deal, despite what conservative critics have maintained since the 1930s, did not consist of the state (the government) merely handing out benefices to the nation (the people), turning citizens into dependent wards; it engaged and ennobled people: Social Security and all the jobs programs and rural electrification plans and federal mortgage-insurance programs were examples of the state giving people the tools to improve their own lives while improving the collective life of the country (to say nothing of the way Franklin Roosevelt rallied Americans to common purpose in fighting through the Depression and the war). Harry Truman turned the idea of common purpose outward to the rest of the world, enacting the Marshall Plan, creating NATO and other regional alliances, exhorting Americans to understand that they belonged to a community larger than even their country. John Kennedy engaged Americans precisely at the level of asking them to sacrifice for a common good, through the things that are obvious to us—the Peace Corps, and of course "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country"—and through things that history's fog has made less obvious (his relentless insistence that victory in the Cold War could be truly achieved only through improvement at home, which would require sacrifice and civic engagement).

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, until it washed up on the bone-strewn beaches of Vietnam and New Left–driven atomization, fit the paradigm, too. Consider just the first two sentences of Johnson's remarks upon signing the Civil Rights Act: "I am about to sign into law the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I want to take this occasion to talk to you about what that law means to every American." Not black people. Not Southerners. Not even "our nation." Every American—the words gave citizens agency and a stake in seeing that this unprecedented social experiment would succeed. In March 1965, Johnson again emphasized every American's stake in the fight for equal rights: "should we defeat every enemy, and should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation. ... Their cause must be our cause, too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it's all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice."

Johnson and Humphrey knew that desegregation would fail if the matter were put to Americans only in terms of the rights of those directly affected; it had to be presented as advancing the common good.



What Johnson and his advisers knew, just as Hubert Humphrey down Pennsylvania Avenue in the Senate knew, was that desegregation would fail if the matter were put to the American people only in terms of the rights of those directly affected; it had to be presented as advancing the common good. This was a core belief for these Democrats (besides which, they knew—and their testimony on this point is amply demonstrated in books and memoirs and the like—that their programs would never get through Congress if they lacked this element).

Today's Democratic Party has completely lost connection with this principle. How and when did this happen? Against this small-r republican tradition that posits sacrifice for larger, universalist purposes is another tradition that has propelled American liberalism, that indeed is what the philosophers call liberalism proper: from Locke and Mill up to John Rawls in our time, a greater emphasis on the individual (and, later, the group), on tolerance, on rights, and on social justice. In theory, it is not inevitable that these two traditions must clash. But in the 1960s, it was inevitable that they did. And it is clear which side has won the argument within the Democratic Party.

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The old liberalism got America out of depression, won the war against fascism, built the middle class, created global alliances, and made education and health care far closer to universal than they had ever been. But there were things it did not do; its conception of the common good was narrow—completely unacceptable, in fact, to us today. Japanese Americans during World War II and African Americans pretty much ever were not part of that common good; women were only partially included. Because of lack of leadership and political expediency (Roosevelt needing the South, for example), this liberalism had betrayed liberal principle and failed millions of Americans. Something had to give.

At first, some Democrats—Johnson and Humphrey, for example, and even some Republicans back then—tried to expand the American community to include those who had been left behind. But the political process takes time, and compromise; young people and black people and poor people were impatient, and who could blame them? By 1965, '66, '67, the old liberalism's failures, both domestically and in Vietnam, were so apparent as to be crushing. A new generation exposed this "common good" as nothing more than a lie to keep power functioning, so as not to disturb the "comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom" that Herbert Marcuse described



in 1964 in one of the more memorable phrases of the day. Activists at the time were convinced—and they were not particularly wrong—that the old liberalism, far from nurturing a civic sphere in which all could deliberate and whose bounty all could enjoy, had created this unfreedom. The only response was to shatter it.

That was the work, of course, of New Left groups like Students for a Democratic Society, the (post-1965) Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, and a host of others. Other activists opposed the shattering—to the contrary, their goal was to make the Democratic Party more inclusive. But even this more salutary impulse could be excessive, as with the famous example of the Cook County delegation to the 1972 Democratic Convention, in which, of the 59 delegates, only three were Poles. Many in the Democratic Party of that era opposed these attempts at inclusion and new social-justice efforts vehemently. But in time, the party rid itself of those elements, and some of the '60s activists became Democratic operatives and even politicians. The stance of radical oppositionism dissipated as the '60s flamed out; but the belief system, which devalued the idea of the commons, held fast and became institutionalized within the Democratic Party. The impact on the party was that the liberal impulse that privileged social justice and expansion of rights was now, for the first time, separated entirely from the civic-republican impulse of the common good. By the 1970s, some social programs—busing being the most obvious example—were pursued not because they would be good for every American, but because they would expand the rights of some Americans. The old Johnsonian formulation was gone. Liberalism, and the Democratic Party, lost the language of advancing the notion that a citizen's own interest, even if that citizen did not directly benefit from such-and-such a program, was bound up in the common interest. Democrats were now asking many people to sacrifice for a greater good of which they were not always a part.

Toss in inflation, galloping under a new Democratic president; a public, especially a white urban public, tiring of liberal failures on the matters of crime and decline; the emergence of these new things, social issues, which hadn't been very central to politics before but became a permanent fixture of the landscape now; the Iranian hostage crisis; and the funding on a huge scale, unprecedented in our history, of a conservative intellectual class and polemical apparatus. Toss in also the rise of interest-group pluralism: the proliferation of single-issue advocacy organizations. All supported good causes, but their dominance intensified the stratification. They presented Democrats with questionnaires to fill out, endorsements to battle for, sentences to be inserted into speeches, and favors to be promised—and not just at election time; but even more importantly, when it came time to govern.

By the 1970s, Democrats weren't advancing the notion that a citizen's own interest was bound up in a larger one. They were asking many people to sacrifice for a greater good, of which they weren't a part.

By 1980, Reagan had seized the idea of the common good. To be sure, it was a harshly conservative variant that quite actively depended on white middle-class resentment. But to its intended audience, his narrative was powerful, a clean punch landed squarely on the Democratic glass jaw. The liberals had come to ask too much of regular people: You, he said to the middle-class (and probably white) American, have to work hard and pay high taxes while welfare cheats lie around the house all day, getting the checks liberal politicians make sure they get; you follow the rules while the criminals go on their sprees and then get sprung by shifty liberal lawyers. For a lot of (white) people, it was powerful. And, let's face it, manipulative as it was, it wasn't entirely untrue, either!

Bill Clinton took several important steps to address this, and to recapture the notion of the common good. He was quite attuned to the sometimes heated academic debates of the 1980s that pitted liberalism against republicanism and the then-new school of thought called communitarianism. With some programs, Clinton strove toward a kind of civic-republican liberalism: notably AmeriCorps, his program of national and community service that has been a noble attempt to create a sense of civic obligation among young people, even if it has never quite penetrated the national consciousness.

But, after the health-care fiasco, he didn't really use political capital (he would argue that he didn't have any, and he'd have

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a point) to try to build a liberalism of the common good. Here, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) enters the story. The DLC did have its own conception of the common good; indeed, the DLC, along with the communitarians, introduced the vocabulary of "rights and responsibilities" as a way to restore a civic-republican impulse to Democratic politics. Adding that word "responsibilities" was seen by many liberals as racial code, but, to be fair, the DLC also proposed, for example, an aggressive corporate-welfare program in the 1990s (that is, responsibility for the corporate body, too).

On balance, adding "responsibilities" was a useful rhetorical corrective. But in the real world, it ended up applying chiefly to poor black women (i.e., welfare reform); the corporate-welfare plans went nowhere. Why? Because what the DLC gave up on, by and large, was government—a belief in public-sector answers to large and pressing problems. If the rights-based activists of the 1960s were guilty of defenestrating the idea of the common good, then the centrists of the 1980s and early 1990s were guilty of pushing too far in the other direction—the direction of a too-extreme reticence about state interventionism, and of trying to make the rights crowd just shut up. Also—of dressing up small and innocuous proposals in the garb of world-historical significance. The common good was said to be waiting to be rekindled not in the idea that capital should be taxed just as highly as wages, or in large-scale investments in public infrastructure, but in the form of the V-chip.

For all his important successes, Clinton's broadest appeal was to people's self-interest; "I feel your pain." (Let's stop and appreciate that this was quite an achievement at the time, to make voters identify their self-interest with a Democrat!) Meanwhile, even though the party controlled the presidency, it lost the Senate, the House, many statehouses, and several state legislatures. In philosophical terms, the 1990s was really a decade of conservative advancement—checked and meliorated by the presence of a reasonably progressive president, but an age when the attacks on liberal governance that started in the late 1970s really took root, well below the level of the presidency, creating this thing "Red America," making the Gingrich revolution possible, and laying the groundwork for the second Bush era. Then came September 11, and Iraq, and a bulldozing Congress. Democrats were lost in the woods, completely disconnected from their mission and history.



Common Thread: FDR, JFK, and LBJ were all Democrats—and republicans.

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO (3)

So where does this leave today's Democrats? A more precise way to ask the question is this: What principle or principles unites them all, from Max Baucus to Maxine Waters and everyone in between, and what do they demand that citizens believe?

As I've said, they no longer ask them to believe in the moral basis of liberal governance, in demanding that citizens look beyond their own self-interest. They, or many of them, don't really ask citizens to believe in government anymore. Or taxes, or regulation—oh, sort of on regulation, but only some of them, and only occasionally, when something happens like the mining disasters in my home state earlier this year. They do ask Americans to believe that middle-income people should get a fair shake, but they lack the courage to take that demand to the places it should logically go, like universal health coverage. And, of course, on many issues the party is ideologically all over the place; if you were asked to paint the party's belief system, the result would resemble a Pollock.

At bottom, today's Democrats from Baucus to Waters are united in only two beliefs, and they demand that American citizens believe in only two things: diversity and rights.

Sometime last fall, after John Roberts' Senate Judiciary Committee nomination hearings but before the full vote, I was on a conference call set up by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid with a few reporters and bloggers. *The Nation*'s Eric Alterman wanted to know whether Reid would make the Roberts nomination a party-line vote. No, he said; but he himself would be opposing Roberts. His stated reason: Roberts' refusal to apologize to Chuck Schumer during the hearings for his use of the phrase "illegal amigos" in a 1983 White House memo. Let's agree that Roberts should have apologized, said it was a poor attempt at humor. Let's even say that it does demonstrate a certain attitude that is inappropriate to this day and age. But honestly—of all the many reasons to oppose Roberts' elevation to the Chief Justice's chair, *this* is the main one cited by the top-ranking Democrat in the country? Like a bungling politician in a Milan Kundera novel, here is brave Reid, ready to defend the polity, not against reactionary interpretations of the establishment clause or executive power, but against a 20-year-old politically incorrect joke!

Don't misunderstand me. It's one of the transcendent victories of contemporary liberalism, in an era when victories have been few, to consecrate diversity as a societal end, a legitimate

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measure of a good and complete society. Far from having been an invention of '60s radicals, it is in fact rooted deep in the liberal tradition, in that Lockean tradition of tolerance. It's a marvelous thing that this is one historical battle we seem (for now at least, as we brace for the Roberts-Alito era) to have won. Here I think back to 1995, when the Gingrich revolutionaries, and Bob Dole, wanted to pass legislation banning or curtailing affirmative action. Sharpening their knives, they went to their friends in corporate America: The time is right, they said; let's scuttle these racial preferences. To their consternation, they didn't have many takers. Corporate leaders said, well, we've spent a lot of time (and money) developing diversity policies, and they're working rather nicely. Imagine! The principle of diversity supported by a mostly Republican group to such an extent that Congress was taken aback. The revolutionaries dropped it, left it to the courts. These corporations were in fact making a common-good argument to the revolutionaries: Diversity has served us well as a whole, enriched us. And it's not just corporate America: All over the country, white attitudes on race, straight peoples' attitudes toward gay people, have changed dramatically for the better. These attitudes have changed because liberals and (most) Democrats decided that diversity was a principle worth defending on its own terms. Put another way, they decided to *demand* of citizens that they come to terms with diversity. So it can work, this demanding.

On the question of rights, the story is more mixed. Liberals were chagrined, after 9-11, to see the percentages of Americans who told pollsters they were willing to sacrifice some liberties for security, and more recently that only a very slim majority thought warrantless spying was a bad idea. But even this narrative isn't all bad. Majorities support all manner of rights, if with asterisks—to an abortion under many conditions, to privacy unless you're a terrorist, to a fair trial even if you *are* a terrorist, to free speech unless you're inciting to riot. Americans are actually better about this than the French or the British, or just about anyone, really. Again, liberals (with an assist from the Founders) placed this demand on citizens, and a majority of citizens responded.

But diversity and rights cannot be the *only* goods that Democrats demand citizens accept. For liberalism to succeed, they have to exist alongside an idea of a common good. When they don't, things are out of balance, corrupted; and liberalism is open to the sort of attack made by Stanley Fish on *The New York Times* op-ed page back in February. Liberalism, he wrote, is "the religion of letting it all hang out"; its "first tenet" is that "everything (at least in the realm of expression and ideas) is to be permitted, but nothing is to be taken seriously."

This is preposterous, and the column drew many angry (and intelligent) letters. But unfortunately, I suspect that many Americans—not just people on the right, many not-terribly-political people—believe that Fish described liberalism precisely. Anything goes, man, because we don't really think about how a given action affects the community; we just care about whether, in questioning that action, the community is trampling on the actor's rights. We're in an age today—the age of Guantanamo, of withdrawal from the Geneva Conventions, and of illegal spying justified as executive necessity—when rights must be guarded with special care. But to think of every mode of action in terms of whether it can be enshrined as a right is a habit of mind that can lead our fellow citizens not to take us as seriously as we want them to when we talk about these other very real infringements on rights.

Liberals and Democrats of the 1960s had to abandon common-good conceptions in favor of rights and social-justice ideas when they decided that the older liberalism had failed on too many fronts and they could no longer delay the work of securing the full rights of those Americans who hadn't had them. Their decision was necessary and courageous, even if some of them and their followers did spin off into radical and profoundly anti-majoritarian directions.

But that decision is now *40 years old*. And, yet, that mode of thought still governs much about the way the Democratic Party, its interest groups, and liberal activists think and act today. And many of those who don't think and act this way, those Democrats who fight this brand of liberalism, have gone too far down the *other* road—so chary of anything that smacks of the old-time liberal religion that they too readily embrace a new one so promiscuously ecumenical, so intent on proving that it carries none of that old baggage, that it makes room for things like voting for last year's bankruptcy bill and supporting, still, the war in Iraq. Both roads are philosophical dead ends. They're also political dead ends, the former potentially alienating moderates, the latter giving rise to indifference and disgust in the party's base. It's time for something new that stands a chance of reaching both of those groups.

The Democrats need to become the party of the common good. They need a simple organizing principle that is distinct from Republicans and that isn't a reaction to the Republicans. They need to remember what made liberalism so successful from 1933 to 1966, that reciprocal arrangement of trust between state and nation. And they need to take the best parts of the rights tradition of liberalism and the best parts of the more recent responsibilities tradition and fuse them into a new philosophy that is both civic-republican and liberal—that goes back to the kind of rhetoric Johnson used in 1964 and 1965, that attempts to enlist citizens in large projects to which everyone contributes and from which everyone benefits.

Arguing for it is the only way that Democrats can come to stand for something clear and authoritative again. It's not enough in our age, after the modern conservative ascendancy, to stand for activist government, or necessary taxes and regulation, or gay marriage, or abortion rights, or evolution, or the primacy of science, or universal health care, or affirmative action, or paths to citizenship for illegal immigrants, or college education for all, or environmental protection, or more foreign aid, or a comprehensive plan to foster democracy in the Arab world, or any of the other particular and necessary things that Democrats do or should support; it isn't enough to stand for any of those things per se. Some of them have been discredited to the broad public, while others are highly contentious and leave the Democrats open to the same old charges. And those that aren't contentious

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or discredited suffer the far worse problem of being uninteresting: They're just policies, and voters don't, and should not be expected to, respond to policies. Voters respond to ideas, and Democrats *can* stand for an idea: the idea that we're all in this—post-industrial America, the globalized world, and especially the post–9-11 world in which free peoples have to unite to fight new threats—together, and that we have to pull together, make some sacrifices, and, just sometimes, look beyond our own interests to solve our problems and create the future.

The common good is common sense, and the historical time is right for it, for two reasons. First, what I'm trying to describe here is post-ideological in the best sense, a sense that could have broader appeal than what we normally think of as liberal ideology, because what's at the core of this worldview isn't ideology. It's something more innately human: faith. Not religious faith. Faith in America and its potential to do good; faith that we can build a civic sphere in which engagement and deliberation lead to good and rational outcomes; and faith that citizens might once again reciprocally recognize, as they did in the era of Democratic dominance, that they will gain from these outcomes. Maintaining such a faith is extraordinarily difficult in the face of the right-wing noise machine and a conservative movement that, to put it mildly, do not engage in good-faith civic debate. Conservatism can succeed on such a cynical basis; its darker view of human nature accepts discord as a fact of life and exploits it. But for *liberalism*, which is grounded in a more benign view of human nature, to succeed, the most persuasive answer to bad faith, as Martin Luther King showed, is more good faith. All Americans are not Bill O'Reilly fans or *Wall Street Journal* editorialists. While they may not call themselves liberals, many of them—enough of them—are intelligent people who want to be inspired by someone to help their country.

The second reason this could succeed is simple: the Bush years. By 2008, we will have lived through seven-plus years of an administration that has done almost nothing for the common good, that has unleashed the most rapacious social Darwinism we've seen in this country for at least 80 years, and that has catered to its interest groups far more, at once more obsequiously and more arrogantly, than even the Mondale-era Democrats did. Americans are, and will be, ready for something very different.

Here, I can even offer some proof. A March 2006 research project by the Center for American Progress (CAP) asked 900 Americans of all political stripes a series of questions about the role of faith and values in public life. The numbers, shared with me and about to be released publicly, support the contention that Americans recognize the absence of a common good in civic life and yearn for some leadership that will do something about it. The survey asked respondents whether they agreed with a series of 12 assertions about American life today; 68 percent strongly agreed with the assertion that "our government should be committed to the common good." This placed second only to "Americans are becoming too materialistic" (71 percent); it tied with "our government should uphold basic decency and dignity," which is a similar sentiment, and it came in well ahead of such conservative chestnuts as "religion is on the decline in America" (41 percent) and "not enough Americans know right from wrong anymore" (46 percent). Respondents were then given an opportunity to offer open-ended descriptions of what the phrase "'the common good' means to you personally." As with any open-ended poll question, answers were all over the lot, but the two most frequently volunteered answers used language that could have been plucked from this essay: "Good for all concerned/involved/more than individual" (20 percent), and "Good for the majority/not just for the few" (15 percent). One poll isn't conclusive, of course; but this one strongly suggests a nascent sentiment that Democrats can tap into.

TWO THINGS HAVE TO HAPPEN BEFORE THE DEMOCRATS will be able to do this. First, the way interest-group politics are done in today's Democratic Party just has to change. I'm not the first to observe this recently—indeed, momentum is gathering behind this view, although it's still a long way from being a consensus one. In their controversial 2004 paper, "The Death of Environmentalism," Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger blasted the environmental movement's tactical narrowness and outdated intellectual frameworks. In their perceptive and passionate new book *Crashing the Gate*, Markos Moulitsas Zuniga and Jerome Armstrong rebuke liberal interest groups for a variety of sins, notably of feeling the need to endorse a few moderate Republicans for Congress even though those Republicans, while they might have acceptable records on issue X, Y, or Z, will go on to make Bill Frist the majority leader and Dennis Hastert the speaker—and with that single vote, more than cancel out whatever nice things they do when nothing's on the line.

By 2008, we will have lived through seven years of an administration that has done nothing for the common good, and has catered to its interest groups obsequiously. Americans will be ready for a change.



This kind of politics is shallow, it's shortsighted, it's anti-progressive, and it nullifies the idea that there might even be a common good. Interest groups need to start thinking in common-good terms. Much of the work done by these groups, and many of their goals, are laudable. But if they can't justify that work and those goals in more universalist terms rather than particularist ones, then they just shouldn't be taken seriously. Immigration policy can't be chiefly about the rights of undocumented immigrants; it needs to be about what's good for the country. Similarly with civil-rights policy—affirmative action, say, which will surely be up for review one day again when a case reaches the Roberts court. As I noted above, when talking

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about Gingrich's failure in 1995, there exist powerful common-good arguments for affirmative action. In addition to the idea that diversity enriches private-sector environments, affirmative action has been the most important single factor in the last 40 years in the broad expansion of the black middle class, which in turn (as more blacks and whites work and live together) has dramatically improved race relations in this county, which has been good, as LBJ would put it, for every American.

The second thing that has to happen is that Democrats must lead—the interest groups and the rest of us—toward this new paradigm. Someone in the party has to decide to bust the mold. I dream of the Democratic presidential candidate who, in his—or *her*—announcement speech in August 2007 says something like the following: "To the single-issue groups arrayed around my party, I say this. I respect the work you do and support your causes. But I won't seek and don't want your endorsement. My staff and I won't be filling out any questionnaires. You know my track record; decide from it whether I'll be a good president. But I am running to communicate to Americans that I put the common interest over particular interests." Okay, I *said* it was a dream. But there it is—in one bold stroke, a candidate occupies the highest moral ground available to politicians: to be unbought and unbossed.

It's hard for groups to change, and they must be given a reason to do so—a stake in a new paradigm and an assurance that their interests will not be tossed to the side. The answer is that, if Democrats are permitted to adopt a new philosophy and practice their politics differently—and, if Democratic leaders rise to the occasion—the prevailing situation in this country could change dramatically for the better, and that would benefit all their causes in the long run. I can't sketch out the implications of the framework I propose for every policy issue—those implications will be a matter of civic negotiation. But I can say that a new civic-republican liberalism can justify collective action far more powerfully and persuasively than anything the Democrats have done or said in a long time. Such arguments can be constructed on behalf of almost every single thing the party purports to stand for: health-care coverage for those without it, the need to protect the planet and take global warming seriously, energy independence, asset-building for African Americans and other disproportionately poor groups, a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and more. Such rhetoric can surely be wedded effectively to core economic matters. Last month in these pages, my colleague Harold Meyerson wrote brilliantly about the crisis of the American economy [see "Not Your Father's Detroit," *The American Prospect*, April 2006]—about the need for an industrial policy that addresses the flight of jobs, the health-care and pension crises, and the rest. If the Democrats, when addressing these concerns, sound like they're offering one more sop to big labor, they will inaugurate the same old round of embittered catcalling; if their proposals are rooted in notions of communal sacrifice toward a greater good in which all citizens will have a stake and a share, the terms of the debate are changed.

There are potential dangers here and they should be noted. A too-aggressive common-good framework can discard liberty and rights; after all, Bush uses a conservative kind of common-good rhetoric to defend his spying program (he's protecting us from attack). Democrats have to guard against this; a common good that isn't balanced by concern for liberty can be quasi-authoritarian ("coercive," as the political philosophers call it). Common-good rhetoric and action must be tethered to progressive ends and must operate within the constitutional framework of individual liberty against state encroachment.

But there's an awful lot of maneuvering room between where the Democratic Party is today and coercion; it's the territory of civic deliberation toward a larger common interest, and there are positive signs that some are exploring it. In South Dakota, where legislators recently passed the country's most draconian abortion ban, pro-choice advocates have done something very interesting. They decided *not* to sue. Instead they're circulating petitions to hold a referendum on the law. The *Los Angeles Times* reports that "even in the most conservative corners of this conservative state, both Republicans and Democrats—including a few who say they oppose abortion—are eagerly signing the petition." We don't know that their effort will prevail. But we already know that using the political process in this way is a huge improvement over running yet again to the courts. In the long run, showing faith in this kind of democratically negotiated outcome is far better for liberalism.

Some will say that asking Americans to look beyond their own self-interest and participate in a common good will fail, either because it failed before (the 1960s) or because such a request can succeed only in rare moments—a time of war or of deep domestic crisis. But that isn't what failed in the '60s. The first half of the '60s, the civic-republican liberal half, succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. The second half, the half that ditched the common good, is what failed, and it failed for precisely the reason that it did so. And yes, it may be that the times when such appeals can work are comparatively rare in American history.

But what if, as the CAP poll suggests, this is one of those moments? We are not in a Depression-like crisis, perhaps; but thanks to the efforts of the Bush administration we are on the precipice of several crises, and it's not just liberals who recognize this. Many of our fellow citizens, bitterly disappointed by a leadership in which they had placed an extraordinary amount of trust back in September 2001, recognize it, too.

The Democrats must grasp this, kick some old habits, and realize that we are on the verge of a turning point. The Democratic left wants it to be 1968 in perpetuity; the Democratic center wishes for 1992 to repeat itself over and over again. History, however, doesn't oblige such wishes—it rewards those who recognize new moments as they arise. It might just be that the Bush years, these years of civic destruction and counterfeit morality, have provided the Democrats the opening to argue on behalf of civic reconstruction and genuine public morality. If they do it the right way, they can build a politics that will do a lot more than squeak by in this fall's (or any) elections based on the usual unsatisfying admixture of compromises. It can smash today's paradigm to pieces. The country needs nothing less. The task before today's Democratic Party isn't just to eke out electoral victories; it's to *govern*, and to change our course in profound ways. I'd like to think they can do it. But the Democrats must become republicans first. **TAP**

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Vice Squad

They **terrorize** other government officials, and they're so **secretive** that their names aren't even revealed to a harmless federal employee directory. And they've helped **ruin** the country. **Meet Dick Cheney's staff.**

BY ROBERT DREYFUSS



Bad heart, errant shotgun, and Halliburton stock options in tow, Dick Cheney has ruled the White House roost for the past five years, amassing enough power to give rise to the joke that George W. Bush is "a heartbeat away from the presidency."

Yet, despite the fact that hundreds of thousands of words have been written on Cheney's role in the Bush administration, most of what's been written fails to explain how the vice president wields his extraordinary authority. Notoriously opaque, the Office of the Vice President (OVP) is very difficult for journalists to penetrate. But a *Prospect* investigation shows that the key to

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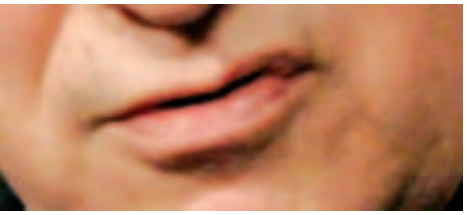
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Cheney's influence lies with the corps of hard-line acolytes he assembled in 2001. They serve not only as his eyes and ears, monitoring a federal bureaucracy that resists many of Cheney's pet initiatives, but sometimes serve as his fists, too, when the man from Wyoming feels that the passive-aggressive bureaucrats need bullying. Like disciplined Bolsheviks slicing through a fractious opposition, Cheney's team operates with a single-minded, ideological focus on the exercise of American military power, a belief in the untrammeled power of the presidency, and a fierce penchant for secrecy.

Since 2001, reporters and columnists have tended to refer to Cheney's office obliquely, if at all. Rather than explicitly discuss the neoconservative cabal that has assumed control of important parts of U.S. policy since September 11, they couple references to "the civilians at the Pentagon" with "officials in the vice president's office" when referring to administration hard-liners. But rarely do the mainstream media provide much detail to explain who those people are, what they've done, and how they operate.

At the high-water mark of neoconservative power, when coalition forces invaded Iraq in March 2003, the vice president's office was the command center for a web of like-minded officials in the White House, the Pentagon, the State Department, and other agencies, often described by former officials as "Dick Cheney's spies." Now, thanks to a misguided war and a bungled occupation, along with a string of foreign-policy failures that have alienated U.S. allies and triggered a wave of anti-American feeling around the globe, the numbers and influence of those Cheneyites outside the office have receded. No longer quite so commanding, the office seems more like a bunker for neoconservatives and their fellow travelers in the administration. Yet if only because of Dick Cheney's Rasputin-like hold over the president, his office remains a formidable power indeed.

Still, for the first time, nervous Republicans are raising serious questions about Cheney. With his public approval plummeting to previously unknown depths for a major U.S. politician—by late February he had fallen to just 18 percent—he has lost all but the most reflexive of knee-jerk conservatives. With the vice president increasingly seen as a liability, there is a quiet murmur among GOP insiders about dumping him. The Moonie-linked *Insight* magazine, wired into right-wing Republicans, last month reported that moves are afoot to "retire" Cheney in 2007. Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, former Bush Senior speechwriter Peggy Noonan gave full voice to the dump-Cheney idea. "I suspect what they're thinking and not saying is, *'If Dick Cheney weren't vice president, who'd be a good vice president?'*" she wrote. "And one night over drinks at a barbecue in McLean one top guy will turn to another top guy and say, … *'wouldn't you like to replace Cheney?'*"



Like Bolsheviks slicing through a fractious opposition, Cheney's team operates with a single-minded focus.

More often than not, from policy toward China and North Korea to the invasion of Iraq to pressure for regime change in Iran and Syria, and on issues from detentions to torture to spying by the National Security Agency, the muscle of the vice president's office has prevailed.

Usually, that muscle is exercised covertly. Last February, for example, after Hamas won the Palestinian elections, King Abdullah of Jordan visited Washington to discuss the implications of the vote. With the support of some officials in the State Department, the young king suggested that Washington should bolster beleaguered President Mahmoud Abbas, the Fatah leader, to counter the new power of Hamas.

Then John Hannah intervened. A former official at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), a pro-Zionist think tank founded by the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, Hannah is a neoconservative ideologue who, after the resignation of Irving Lewis "Scooter" Libby, moved up to become Vice President Dick Cheney's top adviser on national security.

Hannah moved instantly to undermine Abdullah's influence. Not only should the United States not deal with Hamas, but Abbas, Fatah, and the entire Palestinian Authority were no longer relevant, he argued, according to intelligence insiders. Speaking for the vice president's office, Hannah instead sought to align U.S. policy with the go-it-alone strategy of Israel's hard-liners, including Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his stricken patron and predecessor, Ariel Sharon. Olmert soon stunned observers by declaring that Israel would unilaterally set final borders in the West Bank, annexing large swaths of occupied land, by the year 2010. His declaration precisely mirrored Hannah's argument that Israel should act alone.

Whether that viewpoint will prevail in the United States is unclear, but early indications are that the Bush administration is swinging in that direction. Hannah's intervention is typical of how the OVP staff has engaged at all levels of the U.S. policy-making process to overcome opposition from professionals in the State Department, the intelligence community, and even the National Security Council (NSC) itself.

Richard Perle, who formerly served on the Defense Policy Board, insists that the power of those who share his worldview is exaggerated. "The myth of the power of the neoconservatives in the administration is exactly that," says Perle. "The president holds the views that he holds. And the people you're talking about are much closer to the president's view than the people they are arguing against." But officials who have opposed Cheney believe that President Bush has "views" only about basic principles, and that in making dozens of complex decisions he relies on pre-determined staff papers. Says one insider deeply involved in U.S. policy toward North Korea: "The president is given only the most basic notions about the Korea issue. They tell him, 'Above South Korea is a country called North Korea. It is an evil regime.' … So that translates into a presidential decision: Why enter into any agreement with an evil regime?"

PREVIOUS PAGE: JASON REED/REUTERS/LANDOV

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Last fall, when U.S. envoy Christopher Hill was planning to visit North Korea to try to resolve the impasse over that country's nuclear weapons, Cheney's staff intervened to kill Hill's mission, according to sources involved in planning his trip. That the Office of the Vice President can kill a major initiative by the State Department and the NSC, on an issue of the highest priority, is stark testament to the sustained power of the vice president's office. And despite Cheney's unpopularity—and the parallel decline of neoconservative influence—it remains a potent force.

Devoid of well-known names and faces, the OVP was nearly invisible to the public until last fall. That's when "Scooter" Libby was indicted for lying to federal investigators in the Valerie Plame case, focusing the media spotlight on the vice president's chief of staff and top national security adviser, who resigned immediately. Aside from Libby, however, virtually none of Cheney's current aides has endured any scrutiny. Outside the Washington cognoscenti, it's a safe bet that not one in a hundred Americans could name a single Cheney aide. Since 2001, the list has included David Addington, who replaced Libby; top national security advisers such as Eric Edelman and Victoria Nuland; radical-right Middle East specialists such as Hannah, William J. Luti, and David Wurmser; anti-China, geopolitical Asia hands like Stephen Yates and Samantha Ravich; an assortment of conservative apparatchiks and technocrats, often neoconservative-connected, including C. Dean McGrath, Aaron Friedberg, Karen Knutson, and Carol Kuntz; lobbyists and domestic policy gurus, such as Nancy Dorn, Jonathan Burks, Nina Shokraiil Rees, Cesar Conda, and Candida Wolf—and a host of communications directors, flacks, and spokespeople over the years, notably "Cheney's angels": Mary Matalin, Juleanna Glover Weiss, Jennifer Millerwise, Catherine Martin, and Lee Anne McBride.

It is the latter, especially Cheney's press secretaries—he has run through seven of them—whose job is saying nothing, and saying it often. His press people seem shocked that a reporter would even ask for an interview with the staff. The blanket answer is no—nobody is available. Amazingly, the vice president's office flatly refuses to even disclose who works there, or what their titles are. "We just don't give out that kind of information," says Jennifer Mayfield, another of Cheney's "angels." She won't say who is on staff, or what they do? No, she insists. "It's just not something we talk about." The notoriously silent OVP staff rebuffs not just pesky reporters but even innocuous database researchers from companies like Carroll Publishing, which puts out the quarterly *Federal Directory*. "They're tight-lipped about the kind of information they put out," says Albert Ruffin, senior editor at Carroll, who fumes that Cheney's office doesn't bother returning his calls when he's updating the limited information he manages to collect.

The OVP's enduring obsession with absolute secrecy first became obvious during the long court battle early in Bush's first term over the energy task force chaired by Cheney. Neither the coalition of watchdog and environmental groups that sued the OVP nor members of Congress and the Government Accountability Office discovered much about the workings of the task force. Addington, then Cheney's general counsel, enforced the say-nothing policy ultimately upheld by federal courts. "He engineered an extraordinary expansion of government power at the expense of accountability," says Tom Fitton, president of Judicial Watch, the conservative gadfly group that sued Cheney. "We got a terse letter back from Addington saying essentially, 'Go jump in the lake.'"

Addington, 49, has spent almost exactly half of his life working for or working alongside Dick Cheney, from an impressionable youngster in his early 20s to the hard-nosed ideologue that he is today. They first met in the early 1980s, when Addington served as a counsel for the Central Intelligence Agency, the Iran-Contra Committee, and then the House Intelligence Committee, when Cheney was a member of the committee. When Cheney became secretary of defense, Addington was his special assistant and then the Defense Department's general counsel. When Cheney toyed with running for president in the 1990s, Addington ran his political action committee. In the OVP, Addington has emerged as the single most militant advocate for the unfettered power of the presidency. "Early on, with the detainee issues, the torture issues, even before Abu Ghraib, people [would say] that David Addington is the source of all this stuff," says a senior national security lawyer in Washington. "This stuff" includes the spectrum of controversial counterterrorism powers, from military tribunals for captured terror suspects, to justifying torture of prisoners, to detention of alleged terrorists without access to courts or counsel, to the legal rationale for ignoring the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act in allowing the National Security Agency to spy on Americans. "He believes that in time of war, there is total authority for the president to waive any rules to carry out his objectives," is how Congresswoman Jane Harman, the intelligence committee's ranking Democrat, described Addington to *The Washington Post*. "Those views have extremely dangerous implications."



His staff rebuffs not just reporters but even innocuous database researchers for the quarterly *Federal Directory*.

Addington is typical of the staffers brought on in 2001, when Cheney began assembling what was dubbed, even then, a "shadow NSC." Unlike previous administrations, including Bill Clinton's, Cheney's office was loaded for partisan bear from day one. Leon Fuerth, who led Al Gore's office of national security affairs for eight years, says that their far smaller operation was led by nonpolitical or military staffers who weren't vetted for political loyalties or ideology.

"The people who worked for me were all seconded from fed-

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eral agencies, every one of them. They were uniformed officers from all three branches, people from the Department of Commerce, from the CIA, but all of them were professionals and civil servants," says Fuerth. "I was the only politically appointed person. My deputy was at first an Air Force colonel, and after he retired, an Army colonel." He recalls that one appointee, settling into an office in Fuerth's shop, hung a portrait of Ronald Reagan.

There probably aren't any portraits of Bill Clinton or FDR on the walls of Cheney's OVP, which sprawls throughout the executive office building across the street from the White House. Instead, the staff—hand-picked by Libby—was drawn from the ranks of far-right think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Hudson Institute, and WINEP, and from carefully screened Cheney loyalists in law firms around town—all of whom hit the ground running.



If a meeting was heading in an anti-Cheney direction, his aides would say: "We totally disagree. Meeting's over."

Larry Wilkerson, formerly a top aide to Secretary of State Colin Powell, is a no-nonsense, ex-military man who has spoken out bluntly about what he calls a "cabal" led by Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and their top aides. Time after time, in various interagency meetings, all the way up to the Cabinet-level "principals committee," Wilkerson would watch in astonishment as Cheney's staffers muscled everyone else.

"The staff that the vice president sent out made sure that those [committees] didn't key anything up that wasn't what the vice president wanted," says Wilkerson. "Their style was simply to sit and listen, and take notes. And if things looked like they were going to go speedily to a decision that they knew that the vice president wasn't going to like, generally they would, at the end of the meeting, in great bureaucratic style, they'd say: 'We totally disagree. Meeting's over.'" At that point, policymakers from the NSC, the State Department, the Defense Department, and elsewhere would have to go back to the drawing board. And if a policy option that Cheney opposed somehow got written up as a decision memorandum and sent to the Oval Office, he showed up to kill it. "The vice president's second or third bite at the apple was when he'd walk in to see the president," says Wilkerson. "And things would get reversed, because of the vice president's meeting in the Oval Office with no one else there."

According to Fuerth, such a skewed modus operandi was unthinkable in the Clinton-Gore administration. "There is no doubt that we exercised a great deal of influence, but it was never in the form of a peremptory, you-may-not-go-down-this-path, or you-must-go-down-this-path," he says. "It was advisory."

Former Cheney aides tend to confirm Wilkerson's version of how the OVP operates. Dean McGrath, who served as Cheney's deputy chief of staff under Libby from 2001 until last year, says he didn't hesitate to express the vice president's views during the policy-making process. "I tried to convey at meetings where he would come down on issues," says McGrath. An important mission of the OVP was to do battle with a resistant bureaucracy. "Often you'd have the permanent bureaucracy that was not on board, especially on all of the issues where you're trying to change things," he says.

Aaron Friedberg, who served as Cheney's director of policy planning for three years, agrees that the bureaucracy was often an obstacle. "It's not an active resistance. It's a passive skepticism about the whole direction of policy." Friedberg, who says that he worked on issues of "terrorism, Asia, Europe, Russia, North Korea, Iran, just about everything outside of Iraq," suggested that the biggest issue on which Cheney had to confront the bureaucracy was over the administration's push for democracy, especially in the Middle East. That program's overseer is his daughter Liz Cheney, a top State Department official.

Wilkerson portrays the vice president's office as the source of a zealous, almost messianic approach to foreign affairs. "There were several remarkable things about the vice president's staff," he says. "One was how empowered they were, and one was how in sync they were. In fact, we used to say about both [Rumsfeld's office] and the vice president's office that they were going to win nine out of ten battles, because they are ruthless, because they have a strategy, and because they never, ever deviate from that strategy ... They make a decision, and they make it in secret, and they make in a different way than the rest of the bureaucracy makes it, and then suddenly foist it on the government—and the rest of the government is all confused."

Often the rest of the U.S. government—including even the NSC—would operate outside the normal interagency process to prevent the OVP from interfering, according to officials who asked to remain anonymous. Perhaps most startling is the sidetracking of the NSC, which is by statute the ultimate arbiter for policy options and recommendations that go to the president's desk.

According to Wilkerson, Cheney's office and the NSC were completely separate on foreign policy. Cheney, says Wilkerson, "set up a staff that knew what the statutory NSC was doing, but the NSC statutory staff didn't know what *his* staff was doing. The vice president's staff could read the statutory NSC's e-mail, but the NSC couldn't read *their* e-mail. So, once someone on the statutory NSC figured it out, they used various workarounds. Like, for example, they would walk to someone's office, rather than send an e-mail, if what they were going to talk about they didn't want to reveal to the vice president's very powerful staff." But that was difficult because of Cheney "spies" within the bureaucracy, including people like John Bolton at the State Department, Robert Joseph at the NSC, certain staffers at WINPAC (the arms control shop at CIA), and various Pentagon officials, he adds.

Two of the people most often encountered by Wilkerson were Cheney's Asia hands, Stephen Yates and Samantha Ravich. Through them, the fulcrum of Cheney's foreign policy—which

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linked energy, China, Iraq, Israel, and oil in the Middle East—can be traced. The nexus of those interrelated issues drives the OVP's broad outlook.

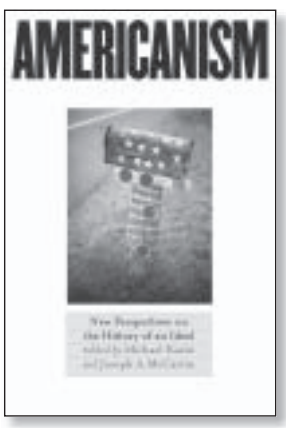
Many Cheney staffers were obsessed with what they saw as a looming, long-term threat from China. Several of Cheney's highest-ranking national security aides came out of Congresswoman Christopher Cox's rather wild-eyed 1990s investigation of alleged Chinese spying in the United States, tied to the overblown allegations about Chinese contributions to the Clinton-Gore campaign. Cox, a California Republican, chaired a highly partisan committee that issued a scathing report about China. According to *The New York Times*, his 700-page report portrayed China as "nothing less than a voracious, dangerous, and fully-equipped military rival of the United States." Among the top Cheney aides who joined the OVP in 2001 from Cox's staff were Libby, who served as legal adviser to the committee; McGrath, a key staffer for Cox; and Jonathan Burks, a senior Cox aide who became Cheney's special assistant. Yates, who joined the team from The Heritage Foundation, is a China specialist who has long urged a more confrontational policy. In 2000, he wrote a Heritage paper offering advice to the Bush administration, and slamming Clinton for accommodating China. He urged a stronger, pro-Taiwan policy while predicting a Chinese attack. Charles W. Freeman, who served as U.S. ambassador to China and has known Yates for many years, puts him in the same category as former Defense Department officials Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, who "all saw China as the solution to 'enemy deprivation syndrome.'"

Yates, who left Cheney's office recently to join the ultraconservative lobbying and law firm of Barbour, Griffith, Rogers, had an important impact on Asia and Middle East policy. Says Wilkerson: "Generally Steve was quiet. But when there came a time for him to speak, the room grew very silent, and that did it. We weren't going any further in that discussion item if Steve said that the vice president didn't like it. And it didn't take too long to understand that the real power in the room was sitting there from the vice president's office." Yates declined to comment for this story, but in an interview with *National Journal* he pooh-poohed the idea that Cheney's office had set itself up as a shadow NSC. "The idea that 10 or 15 people can replicate or supplant the work of the 100 to 200 people on the NSC ... is a bit unrealistic," he said.

For the Cheneyites, Middle East policy is tied to China, and in their view China's appetite for oil makes it a strategic competitor to the United States in the Persian Gulf region. Thus, they regard the control of the Gulf as a zero-sum game. They believe that the invasion of Afghanistan, the U.S. military buildup in Central Asia, the invasion of Iraq, and the expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Gulf states have combined to check China's role in the region. In particular, the toppling of Saddam Hussein and the creation of a pro-American regime in Baghdad was, for at least 10 years before 2003, a top neoconservative goal, one that united both the anti-China crowd and far-right supporters of Israel's Likud. Both saw the invasion of Iraq as the prelude to an assault on neighboring Iran.

Several of Cheney's top aides, as well as the vice president him-

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self, were early supporters of the neoconservative flagship Project for a New American Century, whose founding statement called for a return to a "Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity." Among them were Libby, Friedberg, and Robert Kagan, who is married to Victoria Nuland, the U.S. ambassador to NATO who served as national security adviser in the OVP. She, in turn, succeeded Eric Edelman, another neoconservative who left the vice president's office to serve as ambassador to Turkey before taking over Douglas Feith's job as chief of policy for the Department of Defense.

The pivotal role of Cheney's staff in promoting war in Iraq has been well documented. Cheney was the war's most vocal advocate, and his staff—especially Libby, Hannah, Ravich, and others—worked hard to "fit" intelligence to inflate Iraq's seeming threat. William J. Luti, a neoconservative radical, left Cheney's office for the Pentagon in 2001, where he organized the war planning team called the Office of Special Plans. David Wurmser, another neoconservative from the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), joined the Pentagon to found the forerunner of the OSP, the so-called Counterterrorism Evaluation Group, which then manufactured the evidence that Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda were allies. To that end, Wurmser worked closely with Hannah, Libby, Luti, and Harold Rhode, a Defense Department official in Andy Marshall's Office of Net Assessment. Ravich, along with Zalmay Khalilzad, a neoconservative Middle East analyst and now U.S. ambassador to Iraq, worked hard to build the Iraqi National Congress–linked opposition forces under Ahmad Chalabi. Libby and Hannah produced key propaganda for the war, including the most inflammatory and inaccurate speeches delivered by Cheney and Bush. The Libby-Hannah team also authored a 48-page speech for Colin Powell's 2003 United Nations appearance so extreme that Powell trashed the entire document. That version has never been released.

David L. Phillips, the author of *Losing Iraq*, was a State Department consultant during the prelude to the war in 2003, and he watched Ravich operate. His account provides a perfect paradigm for the OVP's role in interagency meetings, in this case involving the most important decision of the administration's tenure: the decision to go to war in Iraq. During meeting after meeting in London, in Brussels, or in Washington with Chalabi, the Iraqi National Congress (INC), and the rest of the Iraqi opposition (including its Shiite fundamentalist component), the youthful, inexperienced Ravich dominated the course of events because of her association with Cheney. "The State Department officials showed extraordinary deference to her," says Phillips. "It was almost a sense that their efforts would be judged by Ms. Ravich and reported to the OVP." The INC and Chalabi "would run to Samantha when there were disagreements." In those meetings, the INC "would hold forth on their ties to the OVP as a form of threat over U.S. officials or other Iraqis. And U.S. officials felt that if there was a misstep, the Iraqis would go running to the OVP and they would have their chains yanked," says Phillips. In Washington, Hannah served as the INC's chief political point of contact, according to Entifadh Qanbar, an INC official who is serving as defense attaché at the Iraqi embassy.

Like Hannah, who came to the OVP from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Wurmser traipsed a roundabout path to Cheney's staff: He worked with Hannah at WINEP in the 1990s, and then went to AEI, where he directed Middle East affairs, to the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, to John Bolton's arms control shop at the State Department, and then to the OVP. Even among ardent supporters of Israel, Wurmser—and his wife, Meyrav, who runs the Hudson Institute's Middle East program—is considered an extremist. In 1996, the Wurmsers, Perle, and Feith co-authored the famous "Clean Break" paper for then–Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, which called for radical measures to redraw the map of the entire Middle East (Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Palestine) to benefit Israel. Later, in a series of papers and a book, Wurmser argued that toppling Saddam was likely to lead directly to civil war and the breakup of Iraq, but he supported the policy anyway: "The residual unity of [Iraq] is an illusion projected by the extreme repression of the state." After Saddam, Iraq will "be ripped apart by the politics of warlords, tribes, clans, sects, and key families," he wrote. "Underneath facades of unity enforced by state repression, [Iraq's] politics is defined primarily by tribalism, sectarianism, and gang/clan-like competition." Yet Wurmser explicitly urged the United States and Israel to "expedite" such a collapse. "The issue here is whether the West and Israel can construct a strategy for limiting and expediting the chaotic collapse that will ensue in order to move on to the task of creating a better circumstance." Later, with former CIA director James Woolsey and others, Wurmser proposed restoring the Jordan-based Hashemite monarchy in Iraq. While Wurmser's OVP allies may share his neoconservative fantasies of the willy-nilly reorganization of the Middle East, few experts do. "I've known him for years, and I consider him to be a naive simpleton," says a former U.S. ambassador. Adds Wilkerson, "A lot of these guys, including Wurmser, I looked at as card-carrying members of the Likud party, as I did with Feith. You wouldn't open their wallet and find a card, but I often wondered if their primary allegiance was to their own country or to Israel. That was the thing that troubled me, because there was so much that they said and did that looked like it was more reflective of Israel's interest than our own."

Today Wurmser, Hannah, Liz Cheney, and her father are pushing hard for confrontations with both Iran and Syria. Liz Cheney, who exercises enormous power inside the State Department, has secured millions of dollars to support opposition elements in both countries, and she has met with Syria's version of Ahmad Chalabi, a discredited businessman from Virginia named Farid al-Ghadry. Hannah sat in on the meeting with Ghadry, which was arranged through Meyrav Wurmser, a friend of the would-be Syrian leader. Hannah and Wurmser's boss, the vice president, talks freely about the need for a military showdown with Iran to destroy its alleged nuclear program. The true measure of how powerful the vice president's office remains today is whether the United States chooses to confront Iran and Syria or to seek diplomatic solutions. For the moment, at least, the war party led by Dick Cheney remains in ascendancy. **TAP**

Robert Dreyfuss *is a* Prospect *senior correspondent.*

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First Among Thirds

Since 1998, New York's Working Families Party has been that rare thing: a third party that doesn't run spoilers and has real-world impact. Now, the party is testing the waters beyond the Empire State.

BY GREG SARGENT

One morning in 1989, Dan Cantor was honeymooning in Scotland when his new wife, Laura Markham, looked up from a newspaper article about electoral returns in a European Parliament election. The virtues of European political systems isn't typical pillow talk between newlyweds, but Cantor and Markham were political junkies. She'd been struck by the success that minor parties were having. And she had an idea.

"Why don't you do something useful and start a third party in America?" she asked him.

"You can't do it," he said. "We don't have proportional representation."

As Cantor recalls it, Markham rejoined: "You're a wimp."

He wasn't, as it turned out. Seventeen years later, Cantor's Working Families Party (WFP), based in New York, has become that rare thing in American politics: a progressive success story. It has built itself into a powerhouse on its home turf, and, though you've probably never heard of it if you live outside the state, you may be hearing more about it soon, because it's now on the cusp of going national—and in time may even prove to have an impact on national politics.

Cantor, along with an old friend, union political director Bob Master, and many other colleagues, created the WFP by exploiting the fact that New York is one of a handful states that allows "fusion" voting—that is, candidates can run on more than one ballot line, and voters can vote for a candidate under more than one party label. Skeptics, take note: The WFP has nothing in common with Green-style third-party politics, which seeks to pull Democrats leftward by running challengers who siphon away votes and are little more than protest candidates. The WFP also seeks to pull Democrats leftward, but it has no interest in merely putting up protest candidates—it does so by "cross-endorsing" Democratic candidates, giving them a second line to capture voters who might like them but might not want to pull the "D" lever: independent voters alienated from both parties, liberals disillusioned with the Democrats' centrist drift, or moderate Republicans who may like a candidate on issues but are loathe to vote Democratic. In New York, the WFP has been successful

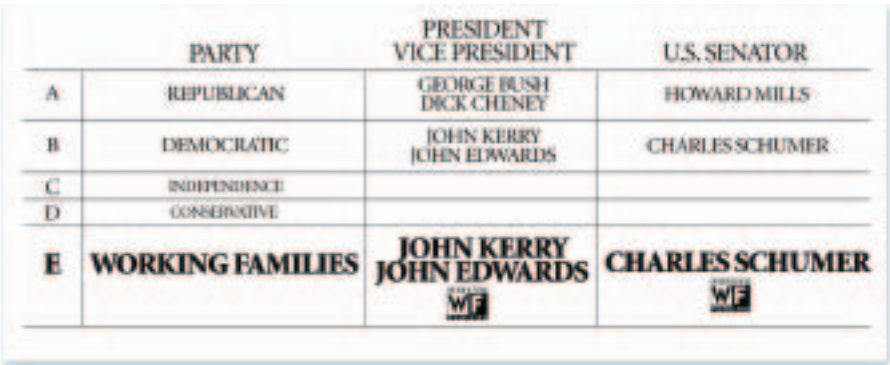


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again and again in pulling extra votes that Democratic candidates might not have received, helping put them over the top in dozens of political races. Indeed, since its birth in 1998, the WFP has overcome much skepticism, steadily growing into a force whose vote pulling has soared, reaching 168,719 for Senator Chuck Schumer's re-election in 2004.

The WFP's focus on Democrats has enabled it to accumulate surprising influence over Democratic officials, yanking them left on economic issues like the minimum wage, which the party was instrumental in helping to raise in New York State, in exchange for its support. Indeed, at a time when Democrats nationally have muted their economically populist rhetoric, the WFP has unfurled a banner of unabashed economic populism. It has managed to get working people of all ideological stripes in New York to listen to its bread-and-butter platform of higher wages, expanded public investment in health care and education, and opposition to shipping jobs overseas.



	PARTY	PRESIDENT VICE PRESIDENT	U.S. SENATOR
A	REPUBLICAN	GEORGE BUSH DICK CHENEY	HOWARD MILLS
B	DEMOCRATIC	JOHN KERRY JOHN EDWARDS	CHARLES SCHUMER
C	INDEPENDENCE		
D	CONSERVATIVE		
E	WORKING FAMILIES	JOHN KERRY JOHN EDWARDS	CHARLES SCHUMER

Fusion, Not Confusion: Savvy New York progressives know to cast their votes in Row E.

In coming weeks, the WFP will begin launching its ambitious plan to channel resources to other states, where local organizers are already hard at work on various efforts to replicate the party's success. The party wants a new initiative on the ballot in Massachusetts for 2006 that would legalize fusion voting in that state. It hopes to do the same in either Oregon or Washington, or perhaps both, if resources permit. If successful, such efforts could eventually help the party influence gubernatorial contests, battles for state legislatures, or, more ambitiously, in congressional and Senate races—a prospect that's already drawing attention from important Washington Democrats.

"They have the organizing capacity to be a triple threat for national Democrats," says Schumer, who heads the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "They can bring disaffected 'Reagan Democrats' back into the fold, they attract independents, and they provide a place for crossover Republicans. They work very well with Democrats. That's not to say they do everything we want, but they see a common cause." The WFP also plans to try to legalize fusion voting elsewhere—it's legal in South Carolina, South Dakota, Connecticut, Mississippi, and Delaware, in addition to New York. The party hopes to add three or four states by 2008 and another eight to 10 by 2012.

But is the WFP's success really exportable? New York's political culture is unique to say the least, and the obstacles are formidable. The process of getting fusion voting—or "open-ballot voting," as the party prefers calling it—legalized in other states is arduous and expensive. It's awfully tough to persuade political organizers and donors to channel resources into something obscure, tough to explain, and a long way from bearing fruit. What's more, though the numbers show otherwise, WFP officials frequently encounter resistance from institutional Democrats who argue that the WFP doesn't bring in new voters and just moves voters from the Democratic column to their own. Still other Democrats fret that fusion initiatives open the door to similar efforts on the right, making it possible for Republicans to join forces with, say, an anti-tax party or a pro-gun party. The odds are daunting to say the least.

From where Cantor was sitting in that hotel in Scotland 17 years ago, the odds that he'd build a third party from scratch looked pretty daunting, too.

Cantor is rapping his knuckles on the table. He's sitting in a restaurant near the WFP's headquarters in Brooklyn, holding forth on one of his cardinal frustrations: The knee-jerk insistence by Democrats that the WFP is just another Green Party. "This is not Naderism," he says emphatically, in a tone that suggests that he's not exactly thrilled to be repeating the phrase yet again.

To puncture suspicions, Cantor—a slim, energetic 50-year-old with a salt-and-pepper beard—rattles off a long speech about the history of fusion voting in America. Though it's all but disappeared, fusion voting was a big part of post–Civil War political life, fueling some of the great insurgencies in American politics, such as the 19th-century alliance of northern Democrats and Populists, which culminated in 1896 in the candidacy of William Jennings Bryan. He lost to the big business candidate that year, William McKinley.

"If you were a Democrat in the 1880s, you were probably Catholic, possibly an immigrant, urban, and wet—you drank," Cantor adds. "If you were a populist, you were rural, protestant, native-born, and dry. Culturally these things didn't fit together. Politically, it was the worker-farmer alliance of the 19th century."

After Bryan's loss, moneyed interests worked to outlaw fusion voting in many states, almost completely eliminating it by the Depression. In the 1930s, James Farley, a top political operative of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, met with legendary garment workers union chief Sidney Hillman to try to revive fusion voting in New York—again to join culturally diverse constituencies behind a common agenda. "The story," says Cantor, "is that Hillman said to Farley, 'We have a lot of Italian and Jewish Socialist garment workers and they wanna vote for FDR, but they don't wanna do it on a capitalist [Democratic] party line.' Farley said, 'Fine, no problem. Set up your own damn party and we'll just count their votes with ours.'" As it happened, because fusion voting hadn't been used extensively in New York, it hadn't been outlawed.

Many in New York have since used it as a backdoor way of building power. New York's Conservative Party, for example, can give a Republican candidate for governor upward of 300,000 votes—handy to the GOP, since Republican voters are outnum-

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bered in New York State by Democrats by a 5-to-3 majority. The Conservative boss—a tough-talking, ex-Marine-turned-liquor-store-owner named Mike Long—is a major power broker. On the left, there was most notably the Liberal Party, a once-venerable outfit that devolved into a patronage mill for its chief, Raymond Harding, a rotund, Camel-inhaling creature of a vanished era.

By the late 1990s—after they'd tried to launch an ill-fated national minor party called the "New Party" with the help of political operative Joel Rogers—Cantor, Master, and allies like the United Auto Workers and the grass-roots group ACORN had concluded that a local effort was far more likely to succeed, given New York's laws. By then Harding's outfit was so ideologically hollowed out that there was an opening for a real progressive party. Polling convinced them that the best name was the Working Families Party. New York law requires that to become legal, an aspiring party needs to get a minimum of 50,000 votes in a gubernatorial election (established parties have to do this every four years to stay in business). With the 1998 gubernatorial race looming, the WFP gave its line to the Democrat and got to work.

When the votes were first counted on Election Night, the news was grim—the WFP had fallen around 5,000 votes short. At an East Village pizza shop that was serving as party headquarters that night, Master stood up on a chair and delivered a crestfallen defeat speech to a couple hundred young, tearful volunteers. "I think I literally cried that night—and it wasn't from happiness," Cantor says. But several weeks later, they were thrilled to learn from election officials that, with absentee and other ballots, their final tally was 51,325. (The Liberal Party finally expired in 2003, shortly after its gubernatorial candidate, Andrew Cuomo, failed to draw 50,000 votes.)

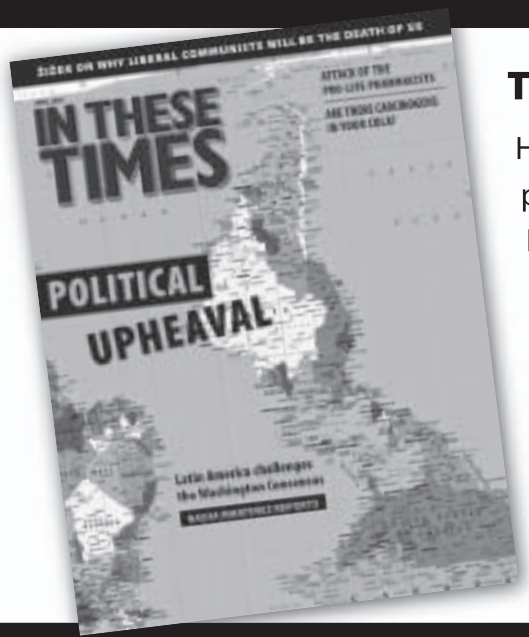


Party Dude: Dan Cantor

Over the next few years, the WFP, assisted by Patrick Gaspard, an experienced New York political operative, successfully allied with Democrats in dozens of local races across the state, slowly building a party infrastructure. Visibility and turnout soared with Hillary Clinton's 2000 Senate election. And with the growth of power inevitably came the need for expediency and deal cutting to get things done—such as supporting Republicans whom the WFP deemed good on their issues. Democrats were infuriated a couple years back when the WFP endorsed several Republican state senate candidates who would help override GOP Governor George Pataki's veto of a minimum-wage increase. Some argued that the defeat of one opposing Democrat, a black female, was a blow to progressivism in the broader sense. "At times their focus on particular issues has put them in conflict with the Democratic Party, and even with progressive goals in general," says one top New York Democrat.

WFP allies say, however, that the relentless focus on a few issues has enabled the party to rack up concrete progressive accomplishments—in addition to increasing the minimum wage,

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the party helped spark the first wave of Rockefeller drug-law reform in decades. "By focusing first and foremost on concrete ways to help the significant percentage of the population that is struggling economically, they've been very successful in arguing substance and ideology to voters," says New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. "They've gone against the grain."

SO IS THE WFP'S SUCCESS EXPORTABLE? IT SEEMS CLEAR that the WFP could succeed elsewhere at enticing liberals who want to make a statement against Democratic centrism. But Cantor argues that WFP's real importance is that it can tip close races by luring many independents, young voters suspicious of the major parties, traditional Democrats whose party loyalty has eroded and would thus vote Republican, and even the occasional moderate Republican.

Cantor insists that his party has unlocked the code that will crack what he calls the Democrats' "What's the Matter with Kansas" problem—the recent failure of Democrats to get blue-collar whites to focus on economic issues rather than cultural politics. This is possible, Cantor argues, because minor parties aren't under the same pressure as major ones are to talk about their positions on all issues including hot-button cultural ones. The WFP avoids these issues by and large, and therefore doesn't have the cultural baggage that the Democratic Party does. The WFP's freedom to speak single-mindedly about "kitchen table" issues, Cantor claims, allows it to make a strong case to Republican-trending voters who can vote their economic interest—that is, for the Democrat on the WFP line—without endorsing the Democratic positions that repel them.

The WFP can solve the Democrats' "What's the Matter with Kansas" problem because it can focus on the economy and duck divisive cultural issues.

"We can say, 'We're not here to talk about guns or abortion. We're only here to talk about wages, health care, and education,'" Cantor says. "That allows us to reach voters who would never self-identify as progressives."

It's easy to be skeptical of Cantor's argument. Why would a nonprogressive turned off by a Democratic candidate's position on social issues suddenly overlook those positions if the candidate's name were on a different ballot line? WFP officials point to a 2002 Long Island congressional race in which Democrat Tim Bishop upset sitting GOP Congressman Felix Grucci by 2,700 votes. Bishop won 2,900 on the WFP line—the margin of victory. Of those, 1,600 voted for Bishop—and here's the key—even as they also backed either GOP Governor George Pataki or Conservative Party candidate Tom Golisano for governor. That means more than half of Bishop's supporters were ticket-splitters—and likely would have backed Grucci without the WFP option. "All we need to do is shift a tiny percentage of voters to completely alter a race's outcome," Cantor argues.

WFP officials also argue that they might appeal to culturally conservative voters who trend Republican because, surprisingly, people are inclined to view the WFP as a centrist party, not a left-wing one. You'd think the WFP's call for expansionist government would leave it easily pigeonholed as a party of the left. But many voters apparently don't see it that way. A recent WFP poll of voters in three battleground states—Ohio, Missouri, and Washington—were asked to rate the party on a scale where 1 was very liberal and 9 was very conservative, after having been told that the WFP fights on "pocketbook" issues "like the outsourcing of jobs to other countries" and "increasing the minimum wage." A surprising 57 percent of voters labeled the WFP at 5 or above.

Still, these numbers don't guarantee national success. For starters, the first and most critical hurdle the party faces—launching successful initiatives to legalize fusion voting—is an uphill one. The WFP says its polling in several states shows majority support for open ballot initiatives, but no one has mobilized against it yet. If the WFP's efforts grow more visible, the GOP and some corporate interests may well channel money into defeating fusion voting, just as they did at the close of the 19th century. And if that happens, the WFP will likely be badly outgunned.

Also, the party may be seen by many as a centrist party when it defines itself. But there's no telling how people would see it should right-leaning commentators and other fusion opponents start painting it as, say, a tool of labor (the source of much WFP funding), or as a redistributionist conspiracy hatched in liberal New York. Finally, it's unclear whether establishment Democrats will lend serious backing to an ambitious effort with an uncertain outcome, particularly since the WFP, while it helps Democrats win elections and strengthens the party's progressive wing, splits candidate loyalty between the two parties.

"The challenge for WFP is to convince institutional Democrats nationally that they should invest resources in something that may take years to bear fruit," says Robert Zimmerman, a top fund-raiser and Democratic National Committeeman from New York. "They also need to show Democrats that they don't dilute the party's institutional control over elected candidates."

In Massachusetts, organizers have collected 109,000 signatures and need another 10,000 or so for a fusion-voting initiative to make the November ballot. In Oregon, the WFP has persuaded many power brokers to support the idea of forming a party there. And in Delaware, the WFP has nearly collected the signatures to create a party there. "Progressives all across the country are fighting huge defensive battles all the time—fending off this attack or that bad referendum," says Master. "We're here to say, 'We're on the offensive in New York because of this party,' and we think we can replicate that across the country. It will be a really potent weapon in the arsenal of Democrats and their allies who want to retake power in America." **TAP**

***Greg Sargent**, a contributing editor at* New York *magazine, writes bi-weekly for* The American Prospect Online.

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Life After Wartime

The recent feuding between Japan and China underscores a little-noted historic dispute—Japan's miserly compensation of imperial victims.

BY EAMONN FINGLETON



Who Knew They Had One of These?: Chinese soldiers at Beijing's Anti-Japanese War Museum, 2005

AP/WIDE WORLD PHOTO

In all the public bickering recently between Japan and China, one fact has received remarkably little attention: Japan's continuing refusal to pay compensation to victims of its militarist-era brutality.

Ever since Japan surrendered in August 1945, one of the Japanese government's key policy objectives has been to slough off all such compensation claims. Japanese officials seem never to have discussed their argument against compensation publicly, but it would appear to amount to no more than the sotto voce invocation of the old saw that all's fair in love and war. Any defense lawyer taking Japan's case would no doubt argue that there was a distinction in principle between Japan's atrocities and Germany's program of mass extermination of the Jews and other minorities. (For the most part, Japan's atrocities were committed in the general pursuit of war, though this defense can hardly do much to excuse, for instance, the massacre at Nanking in 1937 or the truly gruesome activities of Unit 731, Japan's China-based biological warfare research institute.)

As best can be determined, Japan's compensation payments both to war victims and their heirs have totaled a mere $1 billion. This contrasts remarkably with Germany's record. Already by the early-1990s, Germany's payments to victims and their heirs had exceeded $70 billion. The contrast is all the more remarkable for the fact that Imperial Japan's victims outnumbered those of the Nazis by at least three to one.

The truth is that most of Japan's victims, including millions in China, have not received a penny. And in the small minority of cases in which compensation has been paid, the sums have been laughable. In the case of thousands of American servicemen who were interned in Japanese prisoner of war camps, for instance, payments have ranged between $1 and $2.50 for each day they were held. (For someone who was held for 18 months the compensation might have amounted to approximately $600 to $1,000.) Admittedly, most payments were made within a few years of the end of the war, and thus their purchasing power was considerably greater than it seems today. But even at the time, the compensation rates were only a small fraction of what, say, insurance companies in the United States or Britain would have paid to victims of industrial accidents. Yet, by all accounts, the pain and suffering experienced in Japan's prison camps were at least as serious as that suffered by a typical industrial accident victim.

Is this a fair comparison? There are, of course, few precedents in international law to guide us on these issues. What can be said is that there have long been unequivocal standards for treating prisoners of war and, in the case of hundreds of thousands of Allied troops, Japan fell brutally short of such standards. That life in Japan's prison camps was no picnic is attested to by former Veterans Administration official Charles A. Stenger, who has calculated that more than 40 percent of the 27,465 U.S. Army and Air Force personnel imprisoned in the Pacific died

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in detention. The equivalent figure for German prison camps was a little more than 1 percent. (These figures do not include the Navy and Marine Corps.)

Why has there not been more pressure on Tokyo to do the right thing by countless innocent victims? And why has Japan's niggardliness received so little attention in the West? Few actors emerge from this story with much glory. Not the leaders of the American occupation of postwar Japan. Not the American press. And not even the governments of the various East Asian nations whose citizens suffered disproportionately under Imperial Japan.

Japan's first gambit was to plead poverty. In the immediate aftermath of World War II, this had the merit of verisimilitude. Deprived of vital raw materials previously sourced from Japan's overseas empire, Japanese industry slumped in the late 1940s and Japanese per-capita income fell below that of some sub-Saharan African nations. But anyone who took Japan's then straitened circumstances as indicative of its future prospects was lacking in foresight. Before World War II, after all, Japan had ranked well up among the world's richer nations. Its remarkable manufacturing prowess was already becoming apparent, albeit mainly in armaments. The Mitsubishi Zero, for instance, was an engineering marvel, which at the time of its launch in 1940 was the most sophisticated fighter plane in the world.

Yet by the late 1940s, Japanese leaders had convinced American officials that Japan would never again be an advanced economy. The common wisdom of the time was that Japan's export efforts would be focused on the Third World markets and would consist mainly of supplying cheap "knickknacks"—a word used in at least one official American economic analysis of the time.

It was in this atmosphere that an American mission visited Japan in 1948 to guide Washington on the reparations question. The so-called Draper-Johnson mission more or less absolved Japan of all liabilities. There have been allegations that some of the mission's members had serious conflicts of interest because they represented American financial organizations that had extensive pre-war dealings with the Japan's so-called *zaibatsus*, which were the industrial groupings that dominated the Japanese economy in the first half of the 20th century. Not the least of the conflicts appears to have concerned Army Undersecretary William H. Draper Jr., who was the mission's effective leader. Dillon, Read & Co., the investment banking firm where Draper had worked before the war and where he returned after the war, received a lucrative Japanese underwriting deal soon after the mission reported.

In the words of one observer, it was as if the foxes had been sent to inventory the henhouse.

The Draper-Johnson mission's key recommendations were incorporated into the Treaty of San Francisco in 1951. Signed by the United States, Japan, and more than 40 other nations, this document formally settled all issues arising out of the war. It was, however, a case of Hamlet without the prince. For one key nation was not a signatory—China, which of course was home to by far the largest group of potential claimants for compensation. When China began opening up in the 1970s, one of Tokyo's first moves was to press Zhou Enlai, China's Japan-educated foreign minister, to renounce the Chinese people's claims to compensation. For reasons that have never been made clear, he duly did so. His renunciation was endorsed by the reformist regime of Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s, but in this case there was a quid pro quo: Japan promised to favor China in its foreign-aid program.

While this did essentially nothing for the victims, it represented a win-win for both the Chinese and Japanese governments. Chinese officials got to designate the projects on which Japan's money would be spent. Meanwhile for Tokyo, the cost of the aid program—a cumulative total of about $30 billion—was a mere bagatelle compared to what would have been payable had Japan been forced to negotiate with millions of individual Chinese claimants in the world's courts. The aid program, moreover, was a source of countless lucrative contracts for major Japanese manufacturers that supply most of the bulldozers, electricity generating sets, and countless other types of capital equipment used in Japan"s China aid program).

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the whole story is how it has been played in the English-language press. The tone has been set by *The Japan Times*, a Tokyo-based English-language newspaper long regarded as a semi-official mouthpiece of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The *Times* has generally avoided the subject of compensation and instead has assiduously encouraged Westerners to see the war legacy story as merely a question of whether Japan has apologized sincerely enough. It has repeatedly led the foreign press in bouts of parsing Japan's words of apology. Its approach has been echoed by the Japanese establishment's many surrogates and stooges in the Tokyo foreign community, and foreign correspondents seem to buy into the gambit, getting too engrossed in semantics to ask about compensation.

The semantics-only approach remained the status quo until 1997, when Iris Chang published a best-selling account of the Nanking massacre. The book's comments on the compensation issue finally precipitated what Tokyo had long feared: a flood of class-action lawsuits in American courts. Her role was catalytic: the main effect of her book was to bring to the attention of a younger generation of class-action lawyers that Japan had never compensated most WWII victims.

The lawyers arrived too late, however: Most would-be claimants were already dead, and much evidence had disappeared. Moreover, much of what evidence does exist is held either by the Japanese government or by Japanese corporations, which have refused to release it. As Tokyo had hoped, justice delayed proved to be justice denied. Still, thereafter the curfew on compensation talk was moot, and even the most timid members of the Tokyo press community came out on the issue. Some even went so far as to discuss the previously ultra-taboo issue of the German/Japanese dichotomy on compensation.

Virtually every correspondent who ever covered Tokyo bears some responsibility for the press's monumental blind spot. But few have been guilty of a greater lapse than the Anglo-Dutch writer Ian Buruma. In 1994, Buruma, a former writer for *The Japan*

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Times, published *The Wages of Guilt*, a book contrasting Japanese and German war legacies. Although the jacket promised "devastating truths," one devastating truth went unrecorded: the startling difference in the two nations' compensation records. Questioned at a public meeting in Tokyo some years ago, Buruma replied that the book had mentioned the compensation issue. Buruma pointed to a single sentence referring to the fact that some victims of one little-known atrocity by the Japanese had never been compensated. He offered no explanation for the book's silence on the differing compensation policies of Japan and Germany.

(Anyone familiar with Buruma's theme will notice other lacunae in *The Wages of Guilt*. In particular, the book failed to follow up on the subsequent careers of some of Japan's more notorious war criminals, particularly those in Unit 731. Not only did the United States drop war-crimes charges against the unit's personnel in return for access to Unit 731's secrets, but these personnel were never punished. Quite the contrary, many of the doctors who conducted Unit 731's most diabolic experiments went on to extraordinarily successful careers in postwar Japanese medicine. One became president of Japan's national medical association in the late 1940s—right under the nose of the American occupation.)

For Americans, perhaps the most galling aspect of the Japanese failures on reparations is the contrast between the tight-fistedness toward war victims displayed by the Japanese government and the generosity with which the U.S. government treated postwar Japan. According to a 1970 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the United States spent $2 billion on aid to Japan in the first six years after the war. This is double my estimate of Japan's total compensation payments to war victims (this estimate, which I published in a book in 1995, came from Leon Hollerman, an economist who served in the U.S. occupation of Japan in the late 1940s).

To say the least, the compensation story casts the recent spats between Tokyo and Beijing in a different light. It is hard to say which side is more cynical. The only reason Japanese voters are not more outraged by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's baiting of Beijing is that they know so little of the depth of the Chinese people's grievances. The Japanese press, after all, has printed only a very selective account of the past. By the same token, those in the Beijing leadership who have sought to whip up popular anger against Tokyo are the same people who have systematically done Tokyo's bidding by blocking Chinese citizens from suing the Japanese government in American courts. If there were more frankness in Japan, Koizumi would see less profit in posturing at the Yasukuni Shrine (a controversial war memorial notorious for honoring war criminals by name). By the same token, if China had a free press, the Chinese people would see Beijing's denunciations of Koizumi's visits for the cant they are. **TAP**

Eamonn Fingleton *is the author of* In Praise of Hard Industries: Why Manufacturing, Not the Information Economy, Is the Key to Future Prosperity *(Houghton Mifflin). A former associate editor of* Forbes, *Fingleton has lived in Tokyo for more than 20 years.*

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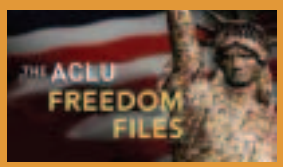
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Culture & Books

"David Sirota's conception of politics as a fight isn't the whole truth, but it's at least half right."

— PAGE 48



ZELA LOBB

MUSIC

GOD, THIS GUY'S GOOD

Don't laugh—the reggae, rap, and devotion that infuse Matisyahu's third album place him in an elite tradition of lofty style blenders.

BY DEVIN McKINNEY

THAT MUST BE A JOKE, I THOUGHT—along with a million or so others. Months ago, there began to appear, on newspapers and Web sites and storefronts, pictures of a tall young white man in a long beard, broad-brimmed hat and flowing coat: the perfect Talmudic scholar, dressed in the uniform of the Hasidic Jew. The word was this: He's an MC doing some kind of reggae-rap amalgam, who's been building an audience with late-night TV appearances and sold-out nightclub shows across the country. His rhymes combine ferocious God-love with the kind of celebratory, Zion-seeking global uplift once associated with Bob Marley. He has a Top 10 rock hit, "King Without a Crown," and a surefire smash third album, *Youth*. He's the latest pop sensation. His name is Matisyahu—the Hasidic beatbox reggae-rapper.

We tend to associate popular genres with well-defined physical and sartorial images: rapper, rocker, diva, folkie. That's partly because it's convenient, and partly because pop culture, for all its talk of freedom, usually codifies itself that rigidly. When someone comes along to confuse the styles, to hang the wrong clothes on the wrong sound, our first response is skepticism, if not laughter. And rap, in its popular dominion, has become a readier frame for the comedy of cultural contrast than rock ever was. Remember "Rappin' Rodney" Dangerfield? That rapping granny from *The Wedding Singer*? "Do the Bartman"? Surely a kosher MC straight outta the shtetl is the sidesplittingest permutation yet. Matisyahu? That must be a joke.

For certain, it's the Yiddish name of Matthew Miller. Born in Pennsylvania, raised in Berkeley and upstate New York, Miller was a typical post-hippie American teenager, wearing tie-dye and following Phish around the country. At 17, on retreat in the Rockies, he saw God; eventually he went Orthodox and joined the Lubavitch sect, which is centered in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and whose controversial messiah was the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Given that Matisyahu, now 26, sings about God and related matters, it's impossible not to class him as a devotional artist—and pusillanimous not to acknowledge that Hasidic doctrine is as male supremacist as any other churchly fundamentalism. But despite the sexually oppressive roots of his faith, Matisyahu sings music that is open, rangy, catchy, novel, and compulsively appealing enough that any listener can take from it the sound and feel of a certain kind of freedom—a licentiousness of the spirit that by its nature is anti-orthodox and represents the opposite of oppression. In fact, more than Hasidism's harsh moral strictures and gender inequality, Matisyahu incarnates the sect's other tradition: its 18th-century comprehension of song as religious rapture and its emphasis on joy expressed through wild dance, free gesticulation, the open throat.

Youth—which follows Matisyahu's 2004 debut *Shake Off the Dust ... Arise*, now out of print, and last year's *Live at Stubb's*—is crafted to take the pop charts by storm, and can stand beside Prince's *Purple Rain* as a work of brash genre-mashing. The music's constituent parts

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have been flying freely for years, but the totality makes a sound that we haven't quite known. Its fundament is the rhythmic commonality of Jamaican ska and Jewish klezmer—blasted through with rock guitar, plumped with tubular bass, and broadened by the busy paws of noted dub producer Bill Laswell. Matisyahu and his three-man band, Roots Tonic, combine the joyous leap of reggae with the spatial expanse of dub and the aggression of rap. The pieces come together, and the whole hurtles itself outward in multiple directions.

It's the voice that centers the sound and draws the crowd. Influences are apparent: Matisyahu's rapping evokes the Beastie Boys' snarky Brooklyn edge, while his reggae phrasing reaches back to Barrington Levy's dancehall holler. Also in the mix are the middlebrow popular stylings of the late Shlomo Carlebach, Orthodox rabbi and the most prolific modern writer of Jewish religious songs.

Matisyahu's synthesis is instinctive and inspired. Every echo of the familiar is subsumed in the creative cacophony of the instant. His voice—deep-throated, rich, utterly confident ("Youth is the engine of the world," the title song quotes Schneerson)—has not only technique but an unquantifiable thing called temperament: It comes off the disc as a living thing, a wild, charismatic entity excited by the world and by itself as a force in the world. Matisyahu allows himself no great range of vocal subtlety—his goal is exhortation, not reflection, statement, not nuance. But his tones can soar and succor like those of a Southern soul man, and in stray stanzas (see "Shalom/Salaam," a collaboration with Muslim rapper Yusu Youssou) he evidences some of Bob Marley's warmth.

The sound punches and the music glides, stopping here and there to switch up the rhythm or play with a plaintive melody. Especially heard in tandem with its limited-edition companion disc, *Youth Dub* (which is thickened with sound effects and nearly devocalized), the album is exciting in its variety. It helps that Roots Tonic are an amazing band—on the evidence, one of the best around. The straightforward rave-ups and plucking of guitarist Aaron Dugan add color and cascade to virtually every track, and without Josh Werner's bass and Jonah David's drums, the whole rhythm-centric machine could never start up, let alone move.

Youth has triumphed commercially, but the album hangs an undeniable notch below Matisyahu's real breakthrough, *Live at Stubb's*, which found a modest success last year and got his current momentum going. Recorded in February 2005 at the legendary Austin, Texas, nightspot (and barbecue rib joint!), its music is every bit as fluid and precise as that of the studio-polished *Youth*. But it's also rawer, more in the moment—not merely because it's live, but because its material is stronger, and because it places Matisyahu in an environment where performance is all, momentum the absolute.

A few of the faithful are perturbed that Matisyahu has gone mainstream. One sample: "Get back to your roots ... get rid of all this synthesized crap."

Stubb's doesn't let up. Not once. On "Sea to Sea," Matisyahu goes from sonorous soul phrasing to freak-jazz scatting. The intro to "Lord Raise Me Up"—calling down sources as obvious as Simon and Garfunkel's "El Condor Pasa" and as obscure as the Feelies' "Loveless Love"—is a rush of guitar strums and vocal intonations, a dramatic suspension between restraint and explosion. The live "King Without a Crown" is far more exciting than the near-generic version retrieved from the debut album for reissue on *Youth*. There is the fantastic funk-reggae combo of "Chop 'Em Down," and the arsenal of breath effects and tongue dances that comprise the nearly a cappella "Beat Box"—a gamut of tonsil trilling, plosive spitting, and palate scraping.

The new album is more melody-centered, less fervid and frantic than *Stubb's*. It's a clear attempt to move past roots, to see how one artist's eccentric expression, formulated at the margins of today's music, sounds in the the mainstream. And inevitably, a few of the faithful are perturbed. Samples from the fan forum at *www.matisyahu.org*: "Get back to your roots matis and get rid of all this synthesized crap." "I know he is going to be mainstream. and that's what kills all great musicians. ... Matis sold out." Granted, these are the usual cult geeks whose pleasure in popular works is inextricably bound with an illusion of private ownership. But the geeks, hateful to admit, may have a point. *Youth* is full of life and juice, but it lacks the wildness of *Stubb's*, that expanding shock of innovation made on the spot, of a moment being snatched and new pages written. To go on being the innovator he can be, Matisyahu may have to dump melody and elaborate production and get back to brazenly crossbreeding genres by tongue and throat.

But he's only three albums in; one can hardly proscribe a future for an artist who, as far as the mainstream is concerned, barely has a past. For the moment, Matisyahu does well enough to embody the impish instinct and creative promiscuity that distinguish the crossover artist from every other kind.

Listening to *Live at Stubb's* again, I tried to remember the last time any pop sensation had me thinking, "That must be a joke." Was it the early '90s, when Kurt Cobain first staggered, slurring and screaming, past an MTV lens? Or a decade earlier, when Annie Lennox and Boy George converged on the mainstream with visions of an eye-shadowed, pansexual future that for an instant seemed almost plausible? Or the late '70s, with flaming creatures like George Clinton and David Bowie? And what about before my time—hadn't people laughed at the Beatles when they first appeared? At Little Richard? At Elvis?

Let's not get carried away here: Matisyahu is not yet in that class. But he has placed himself, wittingly or not, in that tradition. Like those artists, he has mated musical forms for personal ends,

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outraged codes of hip, and risked all consequent dismissals, slurs, and reflex suspicions that he is merely a joke. Talent has brought him out the other side. He is in a tradition, all right: a tradition of tricksters. Matisyahu is funny enough, and good enough, to make you wonder whether the essential pop personality—the one that makes history as opposed to filling it in—is an innovator, or a novelty act, or a joke. Or all of the above. TAP

***Devin McKinney**, author of* Magic Circles: The Beatles in Dream and History, *writes regularly on pop music and culture for* The American Prospect Online.

BOOKS

FIGHT NOW, THINK LATER

HOSTILE TAKEOVER: HOW BIG MONEY AND CORRUPTION CONQUERED OUR GOVERNMENT—AND HOW WE TAKE IT BACK BY DAVID SIROTA
Crown, 384 pages, $24.00

BY MATTHEW YGLESIAS

David Sirota is the kind of pundit you'd like to have on your side in a knife fight and wouldn't want to cross in a dark alley. After toiling for years in the trenches of the U.S. House of Representatives, he began reaching a wider audience, first as the author of the Center for American Progress's daily e-mail update, then as a blogger. He took time off to work on Brian Schweitzer's successful run for governor of Montana and followed up the effort with a trifecta of articles in the *Prospect*, *The Washington Monthly*, and the *Nation*. In these varied media, he pioneered a bracing, take-no-prisoners prose style that combines overstatement with rhetorical flair. I once disagreed with him on the utility of trying to get the left to imitate the lemming-like party discipline of the right only to be met with the retort that I was an "insulated, election-losing" pundit who "likely hasn't worked on a winning campaign, and from the confines of a cushy job in Washington, likely never has to experience the severe economic challenges ordinary Americans face on a daily basis."

His first book, *Hostile Takeover*, puts this sort of style to work in service of a thesis adequately conveyed by the subtitle: *How Big Money and Corruption Conquered Our Government—and How We Take It Back*. The result is rather bracing.

Not content to stick with the small-bore corruption of Jack Abramoff's misdeeds, Sirota's target is the entire nexus of corporate cash and the political system. As ever, profit-making firms try their best to exploit customers and workers, and with the assistance of friendly politicians, pundits, and think tankers the government is doing less and less to stand in their way. Right-wing talking points on the full spectrum of economic issues are debunked, progressive alternatives vociferously defended, and no hint of doubt or hesitation enters the picture at any point. Nor does Sirota shy away from the occasional well-timed low blow. That "two of [Newt] Gingrich's ex-wives admit he sought divorces almost immediately after they were diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses" comes up not in a discussion of religious right hypocrisy, but smack in the center of a harangue about the inefficiency of America's private health-care industry.

The approach taken throughout is frankly propagandistic, and the quality of the substantive policy analysis suffers as a result. The allegations of price gouging by the oil industry would be more convincing if the author evinced some familiarity with the distinction between average and marginal costs and relied less on guilt-by-association with Enron. And how much sense does it make to tout single-payer health care as prosperity-enhancing for its ability to spare American manufacturers the burdens of insuring their employees on page 161 and then slam Wal-Mart for "provid[ing] so few benefits to employees that states are having to pick

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up a bigger and bigger tab" in Medicaid bills on page 162?

But if this is propaganda, it's effective propaganda, and liberalism could probably use more of it. Sirota's conception of politics as more of a fight than a discussion, where the goal is to beat your opponent into submission by any means necessary, isn't the whole truth, but it's at least half right. Certainly, the right largely plays by these rules, and while it's not my preferred style of writing, I'm glad *someone* on my side does it. Sirota doesn't bother with a fair-minded presentation of the other side's views on anything. His central conceit is that there's no such thing as good-faith disagreement. He stands for the interests of ordinary people, and anyone who disagrees about anything is not merely wrong, but a "hack" or a "liar," a bought-and-paid-for agent of Corporate America (capital "C" mandatory). The libertarian Cato Institute is invariably the "group funded by financial services firms such as American Express, Citibank, and Prudential Securities" and The Heritage Foundation is the "Exxon-Mobil/Shell-funded Heritage Foundation." Democrats who take a more moderate line than Sirota's aren't mistaken or timid; instead they "genuflect to the DLC's Big Business donors and its corporate agenda." The Economic Policy Institute, which is partially funded by labor unions and counts many union executives as board members, is simply labeled "non-partisan."

Back in the real world, things are a bit more complicated. My several good friends who are current or former employees of Cato are all perfectly sincere ideologues, very genuinely in a grips of a demented worldview. They tend to know less about Cato's funding than I do, "follow the money" inquiries being the sort of thing one launches against one's adversaries rather than one's employers. The DLC's free-trade (or as Sirota prefers, "free" trade) views are much more likely a reflection of the consensus view, perhaps a misguided one, inside the economics profession than of bribery. Corporate cash naturally flows to people with congenial ideologies, but it doesn't typically *cause* them.

Still, if the occasional *argumentum ad funderam* is what it takes to win an election, pass a minimum wage, or improve energy conservation, I'm happy to live with it. Finicky qualms aside, the real trouble with propaganda is that there's always the risk you'll start believing your own.

Here's where the trouble sets in. Sirota's willingness to concede that many Democrats are less than angelically pure on standing for the interests of working people is in some ways a useful corrective to the oft-blinkered partisanship of the blogosphere, but he takes things far too far. In his zeal to condemn the perfidy of moderates, Sirota ends up seeming to imply that there are no significant differences between the "bad" Democrats and the GOP, a misguided mentality whose popularity in 2000 bears at least some share of the blame for the country's current predicament. Even as unappetizing a Democrat as John Breaux was considerably better than his Republican successor, David Vitter.

More to the point, there's simply very little evidence to support Sirota's colorfully expressed view that "with the wild-eyed lunacy of a crack addict, many Democrats are so singularly focused on raking in corporate campaign cash and reinforcing the status quo that they are unable to see that their genuflecting—not their spin, not their language, not their television ads—is really the core of their problem." Sellout Democrats are a real problem, but primarily in the arena of actual policy. They vote for bad bills and against good ones. That fairly small minorities of Democrats favored the 2005 bankruptcy reform bill or oppose the re-importation of prescription drugs from Canada is unfortunate, but hardly the cause of the party's electoral woes in recent years. Clear majorities of Democrats already support almost all of Sirota's proposals, with the main exceptions (i.e., full public financing of campaigns) being dubious vote-getters. Indeed, Sirota's policy agenda isn't notably different from the one on which John Kerry waged his presidential campaign.

Kerry's loss wasn't due primarily to any inadequacy of his ideas on the topics Sirota addresses. Rather, Kerry was crippled by weakness on questions of culture and national security. Sirota's implicit view that simply turning up the volume on economic populism will make the culture and security problem go away is congenial to those of us who think the party is already too far right on those topics, but smacks of wishful thinking. Putting a stop to the *Hostile Takeover* requires power, and progressives will have a hard time acquiring any until we learn to see the political landscape as what it is rather than what we might wish it to be. **TAP**

BOOKS

DON'T GET MAD, GET EVEN

GETTING EVEN: WHY WOMEN DON'T GET PAID LIKE MEN—AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT BY EVELYN MURPHY WITH E.J. GRAFF
Touchstone, 352 pages, $24.95

BY ANN CRITTENDEN

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT THE news couldn't get any worse, here comes a report from the trenches of the American workplace, where apparently women are still being short-changed in the same old egregious ways. I must admit that I had thought that blatant, in-your-face sex discrimination was by and large a thing of the past, except in a few dark corners of male chauvinism like Wall Street, the extractive industries, the skilled trades, Hooters, and your neighborhood garage. You know, where things are filthy with lucre or grease or grime. But no, no such luck. A new and damning report by Evelyn Murphy, former lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, makes it clear that fair wages are still an elusive dream, even for women working full time, shoulder to shoulder with the boys. As Murphy documents, the reality in every imaginable occupation can be a nightmare.

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Getting Even, co-authored by E.J. Graff, is a litany of abuses, many culled from the records of discrimination lawsuits that were settled in favor of the plaintiffs. We meet the ambitious young police officer who was completely sidelined after her second pregnancy. The woman whose investment banker boss stuffed money in her bra and asked for oral sex. The endocrinologist who found she was earning 24 percent less than her male colleague with less seniority. The chemical worker who was severely harassed by coworkers led by a ringleader who believed the Bible intended women to be subject to male authority. He was promoted and she had to quit. And on and on, in numbing, depressing, convincing detail.

One could be skeptical about the significance of this kind of anecdotal data, but no one can deny the arresting fact that for several years in the 1990s, the gender wage gap between full-time working men and women stopped its slow process of narrowing and actually *widened*. By 2003, women were still earning only 77 cents to the men's dollar. Even among young male and female college graduates, starting salaries were further apart in 2003 than they had been in 1991. (The women earned 16 percent less in their first job than the men, versus 9 percent less in 1991.) Young women with only a high school degree slipped even further behind. By 2003, those working full-time in the "pink-collar ghetto" earned 22 percent less than blue-collar young men, compared with 18 percent less in 1991.

The only group of women who narrowed the gender wage gap during the 1990s was those with graduate degrees. Women between the ages of 35 and 44 with degrees in law, business, and medicine who were working full time narrowed the gap with comparable men from 29 percent to 14 percent between 1991 and 2003. Since these are the women who tend to attract the most media attention, their relative success may have obscured the fact that many more millions of women are dropping further behind.

What on earth is going on? Women have now essentially drawn even with men in education and experience. Murphy cites economist Heidi Hartmann's observation that when times are good, men tend to do better than women. And indeed, men's wages in the booming '90s did rise faster than those of comparable women. By any definition, that ain't fair. Worse, the country accepts this systematic unfairness as a given. Murphy reports that when she asked people what women ought to be earning compared with men, most said they had no idea, or guessed that women should earn about 80 cents to a man's $1. No one thought the answer should be equal pay for equal work.



This passivity may help explain why women continue to lag: They are not demanding their fair share. And that is incredibly costly both to them and to those who share their lives, including most men and almost all children. Lifetime earnings losses due to the gender wage gap alone can amount to more than $1 million for a college graduate and $700,000 for a high school graduate. That translates into a more impoverished or insecure old age and more bankruptcies among women. It means more modest housing, fewer vacations, and above all, greater anxiety about paying the bills, including those for children's higher education. Murphy is eager to convey these personal costs in this book. She constantly reminds readers what they could buy with that money they never earn, asking at one point, "Why would any hard-working, able woman willingly forego making as much money as she possibly could?"

Well, actually, there's a reason. Millions of able hard-working women *do* forego making as much money as they possibly can in order to have more time for life. Murphy doesn't mention that full-time working women don't work as many hours as full-time working men, which surely explains some of the gender wage gap. And her analysis leaves out fully half of all working age women with children, because they don't work full time; they work part time or not at all for money. They pay an even heavier economic price, but do so because they are more concerned about time poverty than relative wage poverty.

This does not mean that they willingly *choose* to be economically marginalized. Many if not most did not really "opt out" as often described; they were pushed out, edged out, sidelined, or derailed. Indeed, if the myriad forms of discrimination and harassment Murphy documents were reduced or eliminated, I have no doubt that countless women who are currently out of the labor force or working part time would return, to the enormous benefit of their pocketbooks.

But by essentially ignoring the other great problem women face in the workplace—time pressure—Murphy limits the appeal of her message. She says nothing of the need for more humane working hours, for paid sick days and parental leaves. Unmentioned is the need to eliminate mandatory overtime

KATY LEMAY

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and to establish parity of pay and benefits for part-time workers, most of whom are women. She is dead right in insisting that nothing is going to change until women themselves demand it, but I suspect that as a childless woman who has always been a flat-out professional, she misjudges the preference that many women have for a less work-centered existence. John de Graaf, the founder of the Take Back Your Time movement, likes to remind people that when thousands of women walked off their jobs in the textile mills of Lawrence, Massachusetts, during the massive strike of 1912, they carried signs demanding "bread and roses"—higher wages *and* shorter hours. These were the two great goals of the original labor movement: money and time to smell the roses.

Still, *Getting Even* is an extremely useful reminder that fair wages for women is a battle that is still not won. After decades of denial that feminism has any relevance today, women have to face the fact that unless they stand up, speak out, and maybe even pick a fight, things are not going to get better and could easily get worse. Not content with just writing a book, Murphy has also launched The WAGE (Women Are Getting Even) Project Inc., dedicated to closing the gender wage gap in 10 years. I clicked on the Web site (www.wageproject.org) and found a place where you can type in your salary and then discover what the average male in the same position, same industry, and same region was earning, based on year 2000 data. I put in a $25,000 income for a hypothetical secretary in financial services in Montgomery County, Maryland. (I didn't dare to put in freelance writer). Back came the information that 95 percent of the people in that job were female, and that this hypothetical woman's salary was 56 percent of that of a male in the same job. **TAP**

Ann Crittenden *is the author of* The Price of Motherhood *and* If You've Raised Kids, You Can Manage Anything.

BOOKS

THE CURSE ON UNIONS

SOLIDARITY FOR SALE: HOW CORRUPTION DESTROYED THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND UNDERMINED AMERICA'S PROMISE
BY ROBERT FITCH PublicAffairs, 560 pages, $28.50

MOBSTERS, UNIONS, AND FEDS: THE MAFIA AND THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT BY JAMES B. JACOBS New York University Press, 320 pages, $32.95

BY HAROLD MEYERSON

AMERICA'S UNIONS MAY BE SHRINKing, but the literature on their decline could fill a small library. Explanations abound. There's globalization, and there's the shift from manufacturing (big plants, easy to organize) to services (smaller workplaces, harder to organize). There was the move of American businesses from the union-friendly Snow Belt to the union-bashing Sun Belt. There's the near total antipathy of American employers to unions, and the rise of the billion-dollar, union-avoidance consultant industry. There's the failure of American labor law to protect workers in the face of union-resistant employers. There's the inertia of American unions themselves, most of which forgot how to organize new workers during the fat years and couldn't for the life of them remember how to do it when the lean years rolled around. And there's American public opinion—at times, hostile to unions, at times friendly, and with each passing day, so increasingly distanced from the life of unions that it really doesn't know what to think.

Now come two new volumes that tell the reader to forget all that—well, most of it, anyway—and focus instead on what they insist is the original sin of the unions themselves: corruption. Not that most unions have ever been corrupt, or that any but a handful of unions have been totally corrupt, but if anyone was skeptical that you could fill the pages of a book with a chronicle of corruption, these books dispel those doubts—at least at first glance.

Indeed, the author of the more sweeping indictment, independent journalist Robert Fitch, sees corruption wherever he looks, and extrapolates it to places where he hasn't looked at all. A journalist based in New York who has been on the corruption beat for more than a decade, Fitch covered the embezzlement and voting-fraud scandals at DC 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees—the union of New York City workers that was once the nation's flagship of progressive municipal unionism. He also chronicled the downfall of one-time Teamster president and reformer golden boy Ron Carey, whose backers illegally funneled Teamster treasury money into Carey's re-election campaign. DC 37 lost its moral cachet and Carey his position in these scandals; Fitch lost all sense of perspective.

This is not to gainsay that Fitch has done some valuable digging in unearthing the misappropriations in unions such as DC 37. But having found hell in New York's civic center, he sees fire and brimstone wherever workers congregate. DC 37's "corrupt governance," he claims, is significant because of what it "says about the dismal state of public-sector unionism in America, which has followed the same numerical and moral trajectory as private-sector unionism." Later, he adds, "Nor is there much reason to believe that standards of integrity in DC 37 were significantly below those of other large public-sector unions in the city or around the country." For these sweeping claims, Fitch provides no substantiation.

It's a methodology he extends to other unions, too. Calling UNITE-HERE the country's "most idealized" union, he provides a long account of the travails of the Chinatown and garment-trucking locals of the old International Ladies Garment Workers Union, one of the four principal unions that have merged over the past several decades to form UNITE-HERE. To devotees of organized-crime or garment-industry lore, there's nothing new about

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many of these stories—going all the way back to the days when the gangster Arnold Rothstein used his thugs to extort garment manufacturers and short-change their workers.

Today, as Fitch acknowledges, those old locals have dwindled to virtually naught, and the union is run and staffed by people out of UNITE-HERE's other predecessor unions who ran the J.P. Stevens boycott and organized Cannon Mills and are working to unionize the Hilton Hotel chain—all exemplary efforts about which Fitch has nothing to say. But as Fitch sees it, because the Lucchese crime family once controlled garment trucking in New York, the new union still carries a burden of suspicion.

New York looms ineluctably large in Fitch's tales of corruption and in those of New York University law professor James Jacobs, a key figure in task forces that investigated Mafia control of unions in the mid-'80s and early '90s. Not only was the Big Apple home to the greatest concentration of organized crime families (particularly in the days before a federal prosecutor named Rudi Giuliani took many of them down) but also to a vast number of nonindustrial unions that used hiring halls to supply workers to small businesses. In the early 1950s, Daniel Bell, who had worked as a labor reporter before becoming a sociologist, argued that organized crime had provided price stability for small businesses in some industries, but that the hiring-hall process enabled mobsters to dispense work to their own loyalists (collecting kickbacks as they went) and deny jobs to everyone else. Jacobs points out how the mob's control of construction work at New York's Jacob K. Javits Convention Center could not be broken until the center abandoned the hiring hall and simply made its construction workers full-time employees.

Jacobs' is in good measure a book of lists: of Teamster locals prosecuted under anti-racketeering laws; of which crime families controlled which construction locals; of Mafia bosses with links to unions; of union leaders convicted and sentenced; of union figures murdered. Happily, there are no entries after 1992 in this last, lengthy hit list—which could mean that the families are growing less violent or less powerful, that their penetration of unions has diminished, or merely that their aim has deteriorated. In fact, the events recounted in both books are not really ripped from today's headlines, though both authors, Fitch most especially, intimate that plenty of evil still lurks.

Fitch's disdain for the existing labor movement knows no bounds and is particularly acute for reformers who fail to measure up to his own standards. Teamsters for a Democratic Union? A bunch of saps who fell for Carey and have backed some corrupt local officials. Hotel and Restaurant President John Wilhelm? Cleaned up his predecessors' dubious locals, but failed to acknowledge his union's mobbed-up past. Andy Stern of the Service Employees? Also cleaned out corrupt local officials, but prefers very large locals with little participation to smaller, more democratic ones. (Never mind that it was the strength of the Chicago janitors' mega-local that enabled Houston's janitors to win a local of their own.) Labor historians David Montgomery, Philip Foner, Stanley Aronowitz, Mike Davis; labor liberals Louis Brandeis and the New Dealers? Too much stress on business power, not enough on union self-subversion.

Both Fitch and Jacobs point out that the United States holds a wide lead over other advanced democracies in its rate of union corruption (as it does in other crimes as well). Fitch argues this is a consequence of the hiring hall and of the all-or-nothing representational model that comes with the closed shop. My own surmise is that it is also a function of the nonideological nature of many American unions and the people who run them. But Fitch and Jacobs essay the reverse equation: that America's failure to develop a socialist movement is largely the result of union corruption. Would that were all there were to it.

Fitch and Jacobs are right that union corruption has helped to sour the American public on unions. But the world of unions is nowhere near so foul as Fitch would have us believe, nor the world of business so fair that if unions were angels, workers could get a fair shake. **TAP**



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The Soldier in Me

BY MARKOS MOULITSAS ZUNIGA

IT WAS JANUARY 1989, DURING MY SENIOR YEAR IN high school. My family was sitting at the dinner table when my mother turned to me: "I was talking to some mothers today, and their kids are all applying for colleges. When are you going to get to it?"

I stared back, "I already told you. I'm joining the Army."

Until that moment, my parents apparently thought my plans for military service were a form of youthful rebellion. Or stupidity. But that night my plans suddenly became real—the start of a months-long battle to convince them that I knew what I was doing and would not be deterred.

Normally, I wouldn't care what my parents thought. I was a teenager. But at 17, I needed parental approval to enlist, a battle I eventually won. Six weeks shy of my 18th birthday, I reported to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to train as an MLRS/LANCE Operations/Fire Direction Specialist, managing operations and logistics for a missile platoon.

I was a mess of a human being. I was 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighed just 111 pounds, and didn't have a shred of self-confidence. In high school, I had been the short, skinny, Salvadoran war refugee with the funny accent who looked half his age (still do) and read books in the (then) lily-white Chicago suburb of Schaumburg. A deadly combination.

I was also a Republican. As a 17-year-old precinct captain in 1988, not even old enough to vote, I helped deliver one of the district's best precinct performances for Henry Hyde. I had a framed picture of me with George H. W. Bush.

Of course, that was a different time, a different Republican Party. And I was a different kind of Republican—always socially liberal, committed to fiscal sanity, and willing to pay more than lip service to the concept of national service. Talk was cheap. I was going to wear combat boots.

MILITARY SERVICE IS A SACRIFICE from the beginning. The cheap combat boots assigned to new recruits blister the toughest of feet—after one particularly grueling 20-plus-mile road march with a 100-pound rucksack, I literally squeezed out blood from my socks. But basic training was the best thing to ever happen to me. They say they break you down in basic training so they can rebuild you into a real man. I was already broken when I arrived at Fort Sill. For me, it was all building.



Eight weeks later, I emerged a brand new person, this one weighing 140 pounds. And after my three-year stint, while I was stationed in Germany and missed deploying to the Gulf War by a hair, I emerged as a Democrat.

There's a reason most vets running for office this year are running as Democrats. The military is perhaps the ideal society—we worked hard but the Army took care of us in return. All our basic needs were met—housing, food, and medical care. It was as close to a color-blind society as I have ever seen. We looked out for one another. The Army invested in us. I took heavily subsidized college courses and learned to speak German on the Army's dime. I served with people from every corner of the country. I got to party at the Berlin Wall after it fell and explored Prague in those heady post-communism days. I wasn't just a tourist; I was a witness to history.

The Army taught me the very values that make us progressives—community, opportunity, and investment in people and the future. Returning to Bush Senior's America, I was increasingly disillusioned by the selfishness, lack of community, and sense of entitlement inherent in the Republican philosophy. The Christian Coalition scared the heck out of me. And I was offended by the lip service paid to national service when most Republicans couldn't be bothered to wear combat boots. I voted for Bush in 1992, but that was the last time I voted Republican.

Lest this sound like an ad for the Army, those were different times, when our men and women weren't treated as expendable pawns in a neoconservative's game of Risk. One of the many tragedies of the Iraq War is that the military is no longer a viable option for those needing a boost up the socio-economic ladder, making college a possibility, granting people the confidence and experience that has paid such huge dividends for countless veterans.

Daily Kos and *Crashing the Gate*, my co-authored book, would not exist without the confidence and experience I gained in the military.

Yet I wouldn't enlist in today's world. I look forward to the day that military service is once again a viable alternative for people like the person I used to be. TAP

Markos Moulitsas Zuniga *is the proprietor of* DailyKos.com *and co-author, with Jerome Armstrong, of* Crashing the Gate: Netroots, Grassroots, and the Rise of People-Powered Politics *(Chelsea Green).*

PETER HOEY

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